

**THE FORGOTTEN CEMETERY OF
THE ST. VITAL PARISH
(1879-1885):
A DOCUMENTARY
AND MORTUARY ANALYSIS**

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ABSTRACT

The Roman Catholic Mission of St. Vital was established in November of 1877 in Battleford, Saskatchewan by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. On the south bank of the Battle River, a small church was soon constructed and a cemetery was opened for the burial of deceased members of the congregation. For a time, this cemetery acted as the sole public burial ground for the growing settlement.

With the commencement of the 1885 North-West Rebellion, the small cemetery south of the Battle River was abandoned, neglected, and forgotten. Instead, the St. Vital Parish opted to bury their dead in the newly established cemetery of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP). The NWMP Cemetery was in close proximity to Fort Battleford, where the majority of Battleford's residents took refuge in the spring of 1885.

In the fall of 1999, human remains and historic-period artifacts were uncovered south of the Battle River on the private land of Neil and Helen Dyck. Initial archival research identified the materials as the remnants of the St. Vital Cemetery, which was used for interment between 1879 and 1885. Archaeological excavation of the cemetery in the summer of 2001 led to the recovery of 30 individuals and associated cultural materials.

Realizing the importance of data provided by archaeological materials and documentary evidence, the investigation of the St. Vital Cemetery was divided into two separate entities. Osteological and paleopathological assessments of the human remains were performed by a fellow graduate student, while a documentary and mortuary analysis was undertaken by the author.

Cultural materials were used to confirm the antiquity and religious affiliation of the burial ground. In addition, the information provided by the cultural and skeletal materials was combined with data collected from various documentary sources to demonstrate the typical Christian burial practices evidenced at the St. Vital Cemetery. Most importantly, documentary sources shed light on the circumstances surrounding the abandonment and subsequent desecration of a sacred site.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate the following thesis to those St. Vital parishioners whose memory lives on through the pages of this document. You shall not be forgotten.

“As the years have rolled by, the men and women who lived our history have passed on. Some were remembered by large funerals, expensive headstones and lengthy obituaries; some have gone with little notice being taken of their passing, except by their families; and, some were laid to rest in unmarked graves. In many cases, little remains to remind us of their achievement or, for that matter, that they ever lived”.

Doug Light, *Footprints in the Dust* (1987: 8).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARMS	Archaeological Resource Management Section (Government of Saskatchewan)
GP	Grandin Province
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
NAC	National Archives of Canada
NWMP	North West Mounted Police
NWT	North-West Territories
OA	Oblate Archives
OMI	Oblates of Mary Immaculate
PAA	Provincial Archives of Alberta
PADA	Prince Albert Diocese Archives
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SVP	St. Vital Parish
TOB	Town of Battleford

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Archaeological investigations of Canadian cemeteries dating to the historic period have exploded in frequency over the past decade. Due in part to increasing urban developments, numerous burial grounds have been unearthed by contractors who were simply unaware of their presence prior to the commencement of construction. In other instances, the general location of a neglected cemetery was well-known, thereby allowing for interception prior to the disturbance of human remains. Regardless of the method of discovery, the initial problem remains the same. In essence, these cemeteries and the individuals buried within their confines have been forgotten. In most cases, these cemeteries are affiliated with “marginal groups” whose status in their respective society is clearly demonstrated by the abandonment and neglect of their final resting place (Bell 1994: 6).

Excavation of the St. Vital Cemetery near Battleford, Saskatchewan took place in the summer of 2001 after the accidental disturbance of the Roman Catholic burial ground in 1999. Realizing the importance of skeletal and documentary analyses in the study of historic period cemeteries, the investigation was divided into two parts. Osteological analyses performed by Treena Swanston (2003) established the demographic parameters (age, sex, population affinity) of the St. Vital Cemetery

population. Paleopathological assessment of individual burial features revealed the general health of the population (Swanston 2003).

Archaeological excavation of historic-period cemeteries, as compared to the study of precontact burials, benefits from the availability of documentary evidence. In this case, documentary sources served as a complementary line of evidence to the skeletal and artifactual remains. Unfortunately, the reliability of written records is often questionable, unless they are proven to be “well-preserved, adequately detailed and in sufficient quantity” (Saunders et al 1995: 99).

The following thesis involves an in-depth documentary and mortuary analysis of the St. Vital Cemetery. The St. Vital Parish was founded in the winter of 1877 in Battleford by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a Congregation of the Roman Catholic Church (Owens and Roberto 1989: 1). At this time, Oblate priests were sent to the growing community of Battleford to promote the Word of God to local First Nations and Métis populations. The early history of the St. Vital Parish, including a brief introduction to 19th-century Battleford, is addressed in Chapter Two.

The St. Vital Cemetery was only used for burial of community members from 1879 to 1885. The chronology of cemetery use by the St. Vital Parish is contained within Chapter Three, as the St. Vital Cemetery was not the only burial ground used by the small Roman Catholic parish in the late 19th-century. A general discussion of death and burial in early Battleford is included and local events surrounding the abandonment of the St. Vital Cemetery are introduced.

Chapter Four describes the initial discovery of the St. Vital Cemetery and the steps leading to its excavation in the summer of 2001. A general overview of excavation

methodology is presented. Primary documentary sources are listed and a critical analysis of the St. Vital Parish Register is discussed.

Individual burial features unearthed at the St. Vital Cemetery are described in detail in Chapter Five. Each burial description contains a host of information concerning the position and orientation of the human remains, details of coffin construction, and an itemized list of the cultural materials recovered with each respective individual.

The confirmation of the St. Vital Cemetery's religious affiliation was accomplished through the analysis of artifacts recovered from the cemetery excavation. This is based on the assumption that, "burial remains and associated artifacts are direct and conscious manifestations of ideological beliefs and practices and can potentially provide more explicit information about the cultural standards of the society being studied" (Parrington 1989: 57). The artifact analysis also helped to demonstrate the antiquity of the burials in order to confirm the identity of the St. Vital Cemetery. Discussion of the artifacts recovered from the cemetery excavation is reserved for Chapter Six.

Mortuary analyses in general reveal a great deal of information regarding both precontact and postcontact groups, "often providing the only direct evidence of changes in funerary customs, patterns of health and disease, and the development of medical practices" (Bell 1994: 2). The arrival of Christian missionaries in Canada had a considerable impact on the cultures of resident First Nations populations. Missionaries (including the Oblates of Mary Immaculate) thought it necessary to abolish First Nations cultural traditions. The effects of long-term contact between the First Nations people, the Métis and Christian missionaries is visible in mortuary assemblages of the early historic period, whereby burial practices began shifting to those of the Church from traditional

burial practices of individual First Nations groups (Wilson 1989). The Métis of Canada presented an alternative situation due to their mixed European and First Nations ancestry. Spiritual beliefs of the Métis combined elements of both their maternal (First Nations) and paternal (Roman Catholic) cultural traditions (Dawson 1979). The typical Roman Catholic mortuary practices observed at the St. Vital Cemetery will be discussed in Chapter Seven. The effects of ancestry and instances of differential mortuary treatments are presented.

Chapter Eight serves as a general summary of various circumstances and events that together culminated in the abandonment and subsequent neglect of the St. Vital Cemetery. A comparison of the demographic information provided by the St. Vital Parish Register to that presented by the cemetery excavation is discussed, while the difficulties encountered in attempts to identify individual burial features is also addressed.

CHAPTER TWO

The Establishment of the St. Vital Mission

2.1 The Oblates of Mary Immaculate

The St. Vital Parish was founded in the town of Battleford in the winter of 1877-1878 by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), a Roman Catholic Congregation consisting of lay brothers and priests committed to a common life among their followers and dedicated to “a life of Christian perfection” (Owens and Roberto 1989: 1).

The history of the OMI began in early 19th-century France in Aix-en-Provence. Reverend Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod, later the Bishop of Marseille, founded the Oblate Order on the second of October, 1815 (Owens and Roberto 1989). Initially given the name of “La Société des Missionnaires de Provence” (Huel 1996: 1), this congregation of the Roman Catholic Church officially became “Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée”, or the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, on February 17th, 1826 (Carrière and Hurkes 2003: 10: 513).

Mazenod envisioned the OMI as the saviours of Catholicism in Post-Revolutionary France (Boyle 2003: 10: 512). The sole purpose of the OMI was the proclamation of the Holy Gospel and Christianization through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism of those who had yet to meet Jesus Christ. The primary target of the Oblate teachings was the underprivileged lower class (Huel 1996: 1-2).

In 1827, Mazenod established the first Oblate Scholasticate, which was located in Marseille, France. According to Mazenod, extensive ecclesiastical training on the part of the Oblates was crucial to the success of their missions (Huel 1996: 2). As a member of the OMI, the responsibilities were overwhelming as were the expectations of their superiors. Dubbed the ‘reincarnate’ apostles of Jesus, the Oblates were to emulate saint-like qualities, welcoming hardships and strife for the sake of the greater good. These duties were prescribed with the idea that “as the early representative and delegate of God the missionary was to reflect the glory, honour and virtues of Christ” (Huel 1996: 3).

The challenges faced by the Oblates were seemingly insurmountable. Not only were they accountable for the Christianization of their followers, but the Oblates were also expected to promote and provide education and catechism to parishioners of all ages. The Oblates were also encouraged to learn the language of their followers if unlike their native tongue of French (Huel 1996: 4). Despite the inherent challenges of their work, the Oblates were soon to be rewarded for their dedication. By promoting the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church through the use of missions and Christian retreats, the Oblates eventually sparked the revival of Catholicism in France, which gradually spread beyond the boundaries of the country to far-reaching locations around the world (Carrière and Hurkes 2003: 10: 514).

2.2 The Arrival of the Oblates in Canada

The OMI were summoned to Canada by Bishop Joseph Octave Plessis (Diocese of Québec) to establish a Catholic mission in the newly-formed Red River Colony, located at the crossroads of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers (Huel 1996: 11). The Red River Settlement was established by Scotsman Thomas Douglas (Fifth Earl of Selkirk)

as an agricultural colony in 1811 and became the residence of numerous retired servants of the Hudson's Bay Company (Dawson 1979: 18-22). The Métis also represented a portion of these settlers. The prevalence of First Nations people living in the area surrounding the Red River Settlement was also of great interest to the Roman Catholic Church. With the Christianization of the First Nations people as their primary goal, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Québec saw the establishment of the Red River Colony as a prime opportunity through which to accomplish this task.

In 1818, two priests of the Québec Diocese, namely Joseph-Norbert Provencher and Sévère Dumoulin, arrived at the settlement of Red River. Traveling alongside both the Métis and First Nations people in an effort to accommodate their nomadic lifestyle, Dumoulin and Provencher implemented what is now referred to as the *Mission Ambulante*, named for the roving style of evangelization employed at the time (Huel 1996: 12). Despite their efforts, the lack of personnel and the difficulties encountered in their attempts to convert the non-Christian population of the West led to a request for the assistance of the Oblates in 1844. The following year, Fathers Aubert and Taché were the first Oblates to arrive in Red River (Owens and Roberto 1989: 1).

The acceptance of Christianity by the Métis and First Nations people in general was not immediate. With respect to the First Nations people, the conversion to Christianity compromised their traditional religious beliefs, something many were unwilling to sacrifice (Dawson 1979: 113; Huel 1996: 18-19). As for the Métis of Red River, they were "nominally Catholics owing to their paternal origin, though certainly far from being practicing Catholics" (Dawson 1979: 27).

After the establishment of the mission at Red River, new missions were established even further west in locations such as Lac St. Anne (1844), Île à la Crosse

(1846) and Lake Athabasca (1849) (Dawson 1979: 84). In order to broaden the lines of communication between themselves and their Christian followers, the Oblates worked incessantly to learn the local language (namely Cree), at times with the assistance of interpreters but often on their own accord (Huel 1996: 29-33).

After a few years of trials and tribulations and the realization that the *Mission Ambulante* was proving to be ineffective, the Oblates foresaw that the adoption of a sedentary lifestyle could trigger the conversion of these nomadic peoples to a Christian life (Huel 1996: 25). Permanent missions were frequently established in the vicinity of trading posts due to the missionaries' needs for transportation and supplies and the reliance of the First Nations and Métis on the Hudson's Bay Company (Huel 1996: 35). Structures including churches and schools were soon erected in these locations. In the years following 1870, missions founded by the OMI expanded further (Drees 1999: 39), reaching locations including that of a small community south of the Battle River by the name of Battleford.

2.3 Setting the Scene in Early Battleford

Despite the establishment of a small wintering post by the HBC in 1868, it was not until the mid-1870s that a permanent settlement was established near the ford of the Battle and North Saskatchewan Rivers. At this time, a small work camp was beginning to form on the flat south of the Battle River. Residents consisted mainly of contractors and surveyors busy working on the Western Telegraph line (McPherson 1967: 15-35).

Initially deemed "Telegraph Flat", the growing settlement was soon given the name of Battleford. Upon its designation as the capital of the North-West Territories in 1876, local residents of Battleford witnessed a population influx as construction began

on the legislative buildings and barracks for the North West Mounted Police (McPherson 1967: 35, 39). Local businesses slowly emerged in the growing community, including local newspaper the Saskatchewan Herald. Housing in early Battleford consisted of small ill-constructed log-cabins topped with thatched roofs (McPherson 1967: 35).

In the late 19th-century, the majority of Battleford's early residents were Métis (PAA, OA, GP, Notes Historiques sur le Mission St. Vital Battleford 1870-1911, ACC 71.220, Item 1896, Boîte 45). With the signing of Treaty Six in 1876, a number of reserves were soon established in the vicinity of Battleford. Reserve populations represented bands mainly of the Assiniboine, Saulteaux, and Cree peoples (Light 1987: 295).

Transient missionaries of various Christian organizations made their way to Battleford early in its beginnings; however, it was not until the late 1870s that missionary activity in the town of Battleford gained more permanent status. This sequence of events was considered rare, as "unlike many other settlements in the west where the churches opened missions to be followed by the settlers, the village of Battleford was founded before the coming of the missionaries" (Light 1987: 21). By 1877, Presbyterian and Anglican missionaries had arrived in Battleford, along with the Oblate Fathers of the Roman Catholic Church.

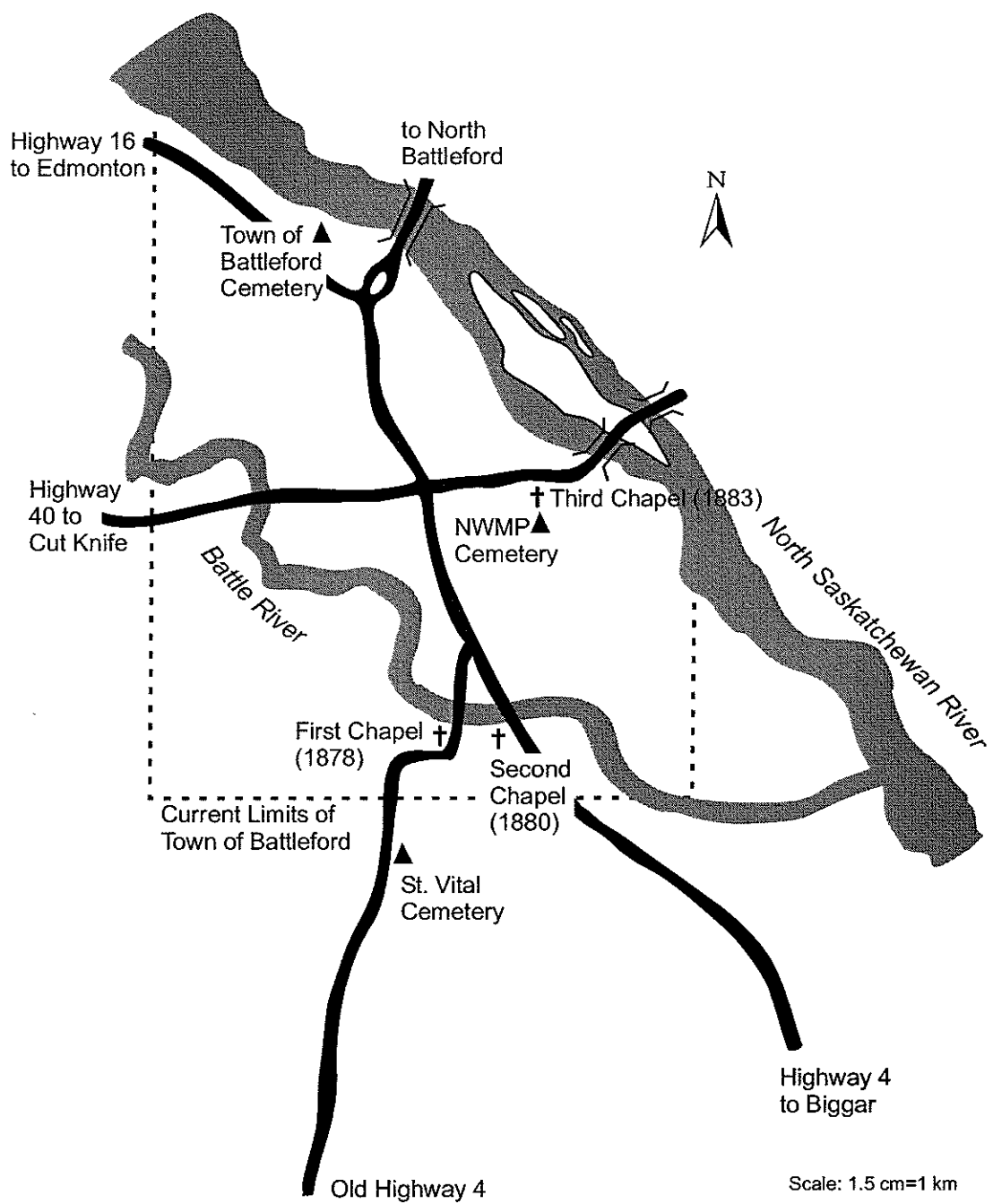
2.4 A Brief History of the St. Vital Mission

Bishop Grandin of the St. Albert Diocese arrived at the future townsite of Battleford, Saskatchewan in 1870 prior to its designation as the capital of the North-West Territories in hopes to establish a Roman Catholic Mission. According to the

Bishop, a number of Christians already resided in the surrounding area, thereby creating an ideal location for missionary activity (Horacki 1977: 17). As with other Oblate missions of the West, Grandin's intentions were to introduce the First Nations and Métis of the region to the European model of Christianity (Huel 1996: XX). Bartering with the Hudson's Bay Company to provide a building for his endeavors, the vision of Bishop Grandin would soon be realized with the opening of Battleford's own Roman Catholic Mission, the Mission of St. Vital (Horacki 1977).

St. Vital Parish was officially founded in November 1877 by Father Alexis André (OMI) appropriately named in honour of Vital Grandin, Bishop of St. Albert. Soon after the establishment of the mission, the first resident priest by the name of Father Lestanc arrived on the third of December, 1877. Without facilities in which to preach the Holy Gospel, Father Lestanc improvised by holding mass in the home of local government official W.J. Scott on weekdays, while Sunday Mass was graciously held in the shed of Commissioner J. McKay. Catechism was taught in the homes of local residents and Métis of the surrounding area (PADA, SVP, Bigonnesse: Notes Historiques sur la Mission St. Vital de Battleford).

In the spring of 1878 for the cost of \$125.00, Father Lestanc arranged for the construction of a meager chapel by Norbert Morissette to serve as the meeting place for his mission (PAA, OA, GP, J.M. Lestanc- Souvenirs 1860-1880, ACC 71.220, Item 6873, Boîte 170). The first chapel was a ghastly sight. Located only 90 meters south of the neighbouring Battle River (see Figure 2.1), the small nine by six meter structure was crudely constructed of tree trunks and mud, ornamented only by a cross indicating its function as a chapel (PAA, OA, GP, Bigonnesse- Historique de la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford 1877-1901, ACC 71.220, Item 1895, Boîte 45).



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Figure 2.1 Map of the Battleford area. Map courtesy of Kim Weinbender.



Figure 2.2 First chapel of the St. Vital Parish in Battleford, Saskatchewan, constructed in 1878. Photograph courtesy of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince Albert.

Remaining in Battleford until April 22nd, 1878 Father Lestanc traveled to outlying settlements in hopes to Christianize the First Nations and Métis residents of the surrounding region (Horacki 1977: 19). The parish register of St. Vital indicated that Father Lestanc spent time in locations as remote as Rivière La Biche to perform the Catholic rites of baptism and marriage between November 1878 and March 1879 (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). Lestanc spent but a few weeks of the summer of 1878 in the town of Battleford itself (PADA, SVP, Bigoness: Notes Historiques sur la Mission St. Vital de Battleford).

Father Lestanc was relieved of his duties in the fall of 1878 upon the arrival of Father Hert who was ordained in France on June 15th, 1878. As a newly appointed member of the Oblate Order, Father Hert was left with the laborious task of single-handedly running the Mission of St. Vital. Father Lestanc was assigned to the neighboring reserves of Eagle Hills, Poundmaker, Sweetgrass, Thunderchild, and Moosemin (Horacki 1977: 19).

The challenges encountered by Father Hert in his two years at the Mission of St. Vital were typical of the Oblate experience. Father Hert lived merely six meters from his provisional chapel in a structure equally as simple in construction. With only two small windows, a lowered roof, and meager furnishings, the makeshift home was constructed of two small shacks combined to form the cramped living quarters of the resident priest (PADA, SVP, Bigonnesse: Notes Historiques sur la Mission St. Vital de Battleford). Isolated from his compatriots in an area where the “white man” was scarce, Father Hert was determined to Christianize the residents of Battleford and like many of his colleagues, “endured incredible physical distress, starvation and long periods of isolation to be able to partake in Christ’s great commission to instruct and baptize all nations” (Huel 1996: XXI).

In accordance with the teachings of the Oblate Order, Father Hert educated the children of Battleford in the teachings of the Holy Gospel. Father Hert opened a school for this purpose and worked to Christianize the local population through the Holy Sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1879 alone, the Mission of St. Vital witnessed the baptism of 47 parishioners, the marriage of five couples, and the burial of three members of the congregation (PADA, SVP, Bigonnesse: Notes Historiques sur la Mission St. Vital de Battleford).

Letters written by Father Hert indicated that the Mission of St. Vital served more than just the Catholic residents of Battleford:

For the Midnight Mass, we apparently had something lovely—decorations, lights and hymns. Never before had the faithful seen such a touchingly beautiful service in the West. Every member of my Catholic flock was present, as well as a large number of Protestants (PADA, SVP, Mrs. J.A. Loscombe, Bishop Leo Blais Officiates at Religious Ceremonies Marking Church’s Anniversary).

By 1884, Protestants were even sending their children to the local Roman Catholic school (PADA, SVP, Bigonnesse: Notes Historiques sur la Mission St. Vital de Battleford).

Due to unfortunate circumstances, the body of Father Hert was discovered near the town of Battleford on October 15th, 1880 after failing to return from a brief duck-hunting excursion with one of his students. Apparently, the child by the surname of Sayer grew tired and was instructed by the priest to return to the parish to begin preparations for supper (PAA, OA, GP, J.M. Lestanc- Souvenirs 1860-1880, ACC 71.220, Item 6873, Boîte 170). In obedience to the priest's orders, the child did as he was asked only to find that the priest failed to return. A search party was sent out the following day and the body of Father Hert was retrieved. Father Hert had once before lost his way in a snowstorm also while on one of his hunting expeditions (Loscombe 1986: 85). Many questions surrounded the death of the young priest, as

the place where the body was found in about three miles from town was quite familiar to the deceased, as it was one of his favourite shooting grounds, and quite close to some of the principal trails leading from the south (Saskatchewan Herald, 25 October 1880).

Investigations performed by J.H. Price (Hospital-Sergeant of the NWMP) failed to demonstrate any indication of foul play or cause of death. The death of the young priest devastated the entire community as he was quite popular with the Catholics and Protestants alike (Horacki 1977: 20). The funeral for Father Hert took place at the St. Vital Parish on the 18th of October, 1880 after which his body was laid to rest beneath the altar of the chapel (PADA, SVP, Bigonnesse: Notes Historiques sur la Mission St. Vital de Battleford).

The death of Father Hert brought Father Lestanc back to the town of Battleford on the 16th of October, 1880. He resided at the mission until the arrival of Father Bigonesse, who then remained as the resident missionary of the St. Vital Parish for some 35 years (PADA, SVP, Mrs. J.A. Loscombe, Bishop Leo Blais Officiates at Religious Ceremonies Marking Church's Anniversary). By the time Father Bigonesse arrived in Battleford on the fifth of November, 1880 nearly 100 residents (predominantly Catholic Métis) comprised the population of Battleford. With Brothers Alexandre and Bone of the Oblate Order busy repairing a house south of the Battle River to serve as a new chapel, Father Bigonesse continued with the everyday responsibilities of the parish. By Christmas, the new chapel was complete and mass was held for the first time at midnight on Christmas Eve by Father Lestanc who returned for the celebration (see Figure 2.1) (Horacki 1977: 20, 24). In 1880, the Oblate Fathers of St. Vital baptized a total of 23 individuals. In the same year, three marriages and six burials also took place (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.).

In the area surrounding Battleford, missions other than that of St. Vital were established by members of the Oblate Order. Father Lestanc founded the St. Angèle mission northwest of Battleford in the late 1870's to bring the Word of God to the Cree at Poundmaker First Nation. For health reasons, Father Louis Cochin (OMI) replaced Lestanc in 1882 (Horacki 1977: 24).

For the Oblates who experienced life on the reserve in the Battleford area, the conditions were both heart breaking and isolated. In his Reminiscences, Father Cochin described his feelings of seclusion as the lone priest on the Poundmaker Reserve: "Judge my anxiety, when I saw myself alone, without an interpreter, amidst numerous Indians,

to whom I could scarcely lisp the language” (Canadian North-West Historical Society 1927: 4: 24). Father Cochin would later establish the Catholic mission on the Sweetgrass Reserve in 1888. He was also credited with the opening of a church and Catholic school on the Poundmaker Reserve that same year and also with the establishment of a Catholic school on the Thunderchild Reserve in 1891 (PADA, SVP, Father Armand Allard, O.M.I., A History of the North Battleford Native Missions).

Despite the challenges met on the reserves, the Oblates of the Battleford area managed to attract a greater number of followers to the Catholic faith with the establishment of such subordinate Missions. For example, between 1881 and 1883, 99 baptisms were recorded in the St. Vital register (56 of which were performed in 1883 alone), in addition to five marriages, two First Communions, and four Confirmations. Unfortunately, these years also marked the deaths of a number of parishioners with two burials performed in 1881, five in 1882, and 11 in 1883, accounting for the loss of 18 parishioners over a three year period (PADA, SVP, *Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.*).

Dissatisfied with the location of the chapel due to the effects of destructive annual floods on the Telegraph Flat, Father Bigonnesse (in consultation with Bishop Grandin, Father Soulier, and Father Cochin) embarked on a campaign to construct a new chapel for his followers (Horacki 1977: 25). According to the *Saskatchewan Herald*, Father Lestanc paid a visit to St. Albert in early January of 1883 for the purpose of securing building materials for the construction of the new chapel (*Saskatchewan Herald*, 20 January 1883). The location of the new church was greatly influenced by the local events of that year. Upon the decision to transfer the seat of government to Regina in 1883, the townsite of Battleford was relocated from its original location on the

Telegraph Flat to its current site between the North Saskatchewan and Battle Rivers (PADA, SVP, Bigonnesse: Notes Historiques sur la Mission St. Vital de Battleford). In 1883, Captain Antrobus of the NWMP offered five acres of land to the parish in close proximity to Fort Battleford and within the limits of the new townsite. The decision to build a chapel at this location was virtually immediate (Horacki 1977: 25). On the third of November, 1883 the remains of Father Hert were exhumed and reburied under the floor near the center of the new edifice (PADA, SVP, Bigonnesse: Notes Historiques sur la Mission St. Vital de Battleford).

As with the erection of the second chapel, the third chapel of the St. Vital Mission was ready for Midnight Mass on the eve of Christmas, 1883 (Figure 2.3). The following year, the second chapel was moved in order to function as a rectory for the resident priest. The original chapel of the St. Vital Mission in South Battleford was completely deserted near the end of May 1884 (Horacki 1977: 26). According to parish records, Sunday Mass was still held in the second chapel for the residents of South Battleford until this time. In 1884, a total of 36 baptisms, two marriages, three First Communion, and four burials were recorded in the parish register (PADA, SVP, *Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.*).

The parish of St. Vital lost a number of its parishioners to the chaotic events that occurred as part of the 1885 North-West Rebellion. Battleford residents, including many parishioners of the St. Vital Mission, fled to the confines of Fort Battleford in the spring of 1885 in fear during the so-called “Siege” of Battleford (Stonechild and Waiser 1997: 89; Ward 1995: 69).

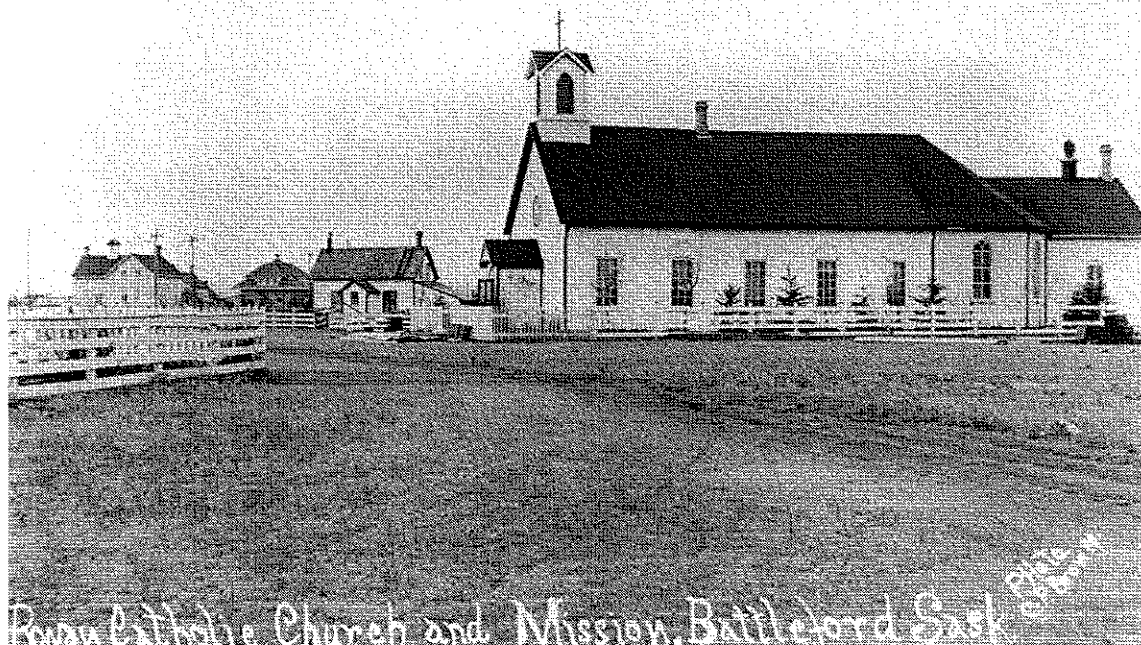


Figure 2.3 Third chapel of the St. Vital Parish in Battleford, Saskatchewan. This church was constructed in 1883. Photograph courtesy of the Glenbow Archives NA-1223-9.

In these tumultuous times, it was the responsibility of Fathers Bigonnesse and Cochin to perform the Christian ceremonies at the fort prior to the hanging of eight men convicted of murder for the events comprising the “Frog Lake Massacre” (Loscombe 1986: 147; Horacki 1977: 27). By the end of 1885, the Parish Register recounted the death of 18 fellow Christians, in addition to 32 baptisms, 10 marriages, 15 First Communion, and 25 Confirmations (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). Additionally, 196 Métis Catholic children were born between 1870 and 1885, as opposed to the birth of only 87 Métis Protestant children in the same length of time (PAA, OA, GP, Notes Historiques sur le Mission St. Vital Battleford 1870-1911, ACC 71.220, Item 1896, Boîte 45).

In the years following the rebellion, the Mission of St. Vital thrived in the growing town of Battleford. The St. Vital Catholic School District was officially formed in 1886, while the Catholic population later grew to include 493 parishioners in 1888 (Horacki 1977: 28, 29). In 1890, a census of the surrounding reserves indicated that the Catholic population, in most cases, outnumbered that of the Protestants. Father Bigonesse recorded the following: Sweetgrass- five Protestants, 78 Catholics, and 25 infidels; Thunderchild- 40 Protestants, 93 Catholics, 40 infidels; Poundmaker- Catholics; Little Pine- 35 Protestants, 25 Catholics, and other infidels; Eagle Hills- 20 some Catholics; and Moosemin- one female Protestant and approximately 100 Catholics (PAA, OA, GP, Notes Historiques sur le Mission St. Vital Battleford 1870-1911, ACC 71.220, Item 1896, Boîte 45). According to the parish records, the Catholic population of Battleford further expanded over the years to include 505 and 571 parishioners in 1896 and 1901, respectively (Horacki 1977: 35-36).

Recently, the St. Vital Parish celebrated its 125th Anniversary on November 10th, 2002 (The Star Phoenix, 9 November 2002: F7). The once meager parish established on the banks of the Battle River in 1877 currently includes a membership of roughly 425 families (Rita Kedl, personal communication 2003).

CHAPTER THREE

Death and Burial in 19th-Century Battleford

3.1 Early Deaths of Battleford Residents

Funerals for various Battleford residents took place years before the first interment was performed by the Oblates of the St. Vital Mission. The first funeral at Battleford took place in the 1870s. Local resident Bill Todd was apparently bitten by an insect of unknown identity and died shortly thereafter due to the lack of medical personnel in the small settlement. The body was placed in a homemade coffin and buried on a 'prominent knoll' near the NWMP barracks on the south bank of the North Saskatchewan River. Local resident Jack Little performed the rites of burial according to those outlined by the Church of England (SAB, Letter to Mrs. Storer regarding the first funeral at Battleford, Collection A186, File no. IV.2, Marker no. 19-326).

Additional evidence exists for early funerals in the Battleford area. An article published in the Winnipeg Free Press in 1876 provided a brief account of a funeral that took place early in Battleford's history, after the daughter of the Board of Works died in Battleford on October 20th, 1876. The funeral in this case was labeled as "the first funeral of a white person" to take place in Battleford (Winnipeg Free Press, 21 October 1876). In this case, the place of interment was not revealed. Due to the absence of a cemetery in the town of Battleford at the time, the burial in question likely took place on private land.

P.G. Laurie, editor of the Saskatchewan Herald, described the death and funeral of yet another Battleford resident in an early issue of the newspaper in the fall of 1878. According to the local newspaper, "Mr. Chartrand was buried on Friday. He was the first, white adult laid in the ground at Battleford" (Saskatchewan Herald, 9 September 1878). The validity of the aforementioned statement is rather questionable, since P.G. Laurie first arrived in Battleford in August 1878 and may not have been aware of other burials that had taken place prior to his arrival, let alone their population affinity. The location of Mr. Chartrand's grave was not mentioned (NAC, RG-13, Justice, Series A-2, Volume 41, File 1878-1364, Avilda Chartrand- Investigation into death of this prisoner at Battleford by poisoning). Again, due to the absence of a cemetery in the small settlement, the remains of Avilda Chartrand were likely buried on privately owned land.

3.2 The Beginnings of the St. Vital Cemetery

The first burial noted in the records of the St. Vital Parish took place on July 31st, 1879. The funeral and burial ceremony was performed by Father Lestanc. As with nearly all interments listed in the St. Vital Parish Register, no indication of the burial location was presented. However, it is postulated that the burial took place in the St. Vital Cemetery (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.).

The location of the St. Vital Cemetery was documented by local surveyor R.C. Laurie's 1886 survey of South Battleford (Information Services Corporation, R.C. Laurie, Field Notes Battleford to Swift Current Trail Survey, Field Book 4479, plan no. 447, File no. 754, 1886) (Figure 3.1). On the southern outskirts of South Battleford, Laurie labeled an area as "R.C. Graveyard" on the west side of the trail.

Ballendine (NAC, RG-15, Interior Series, D-II-1, vol. 426, File 111911, reel T-13124, part 1, South Battleford General File, Map 1882-1925).

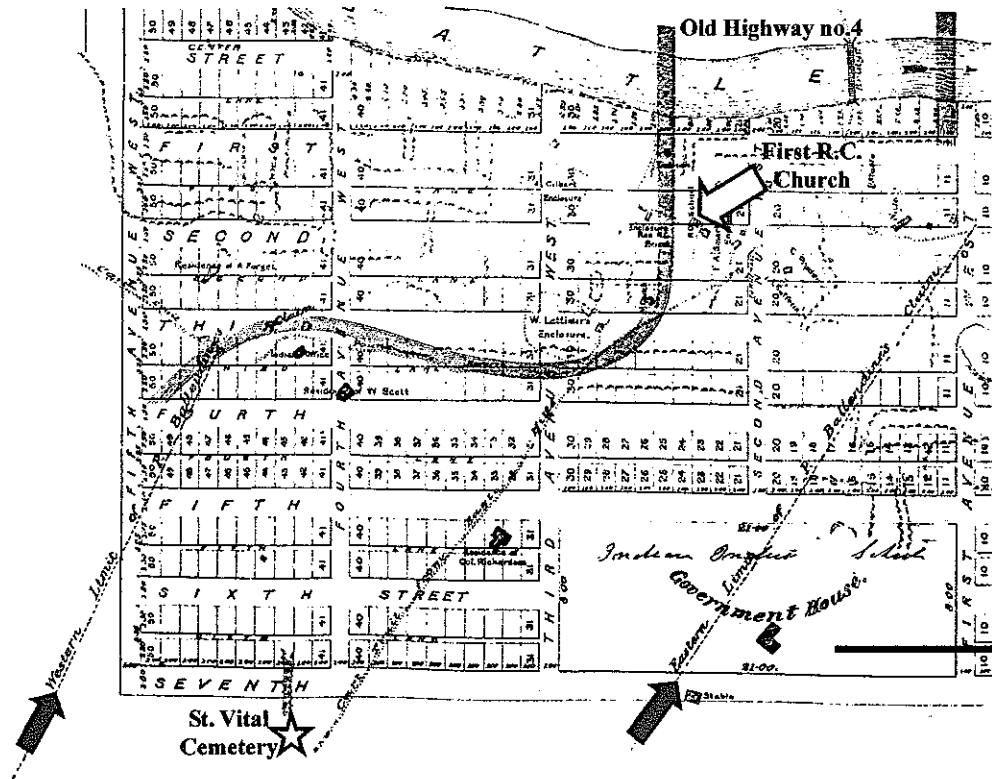


Figure 3.2 A.G. Cavana's 1882 Survey of South Battleford. Note approximate location of the St. Vital Cemetery and chapel on the claim of Peter Ballendine. The eastern and western limits of Peter Ballendine's claim are denoted by the presence of blue arrows (NAC, RG-15, Interior Series, D-II-1, vol. 426, File 111911, reel T-13124, part 1, South Battleford General File, Map 1882-1925).

Ballendine was a former employee of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) who was responsible for the opening of Battleford's HBC post in 1868. Ballendine left the HBC in 1876 to pursue other business endeavors over the years as a Cree interpreter, mail carrier, and free trader (Light 1987). Various church documents demonstrated the link between Peter Ballendine's family and the Roman Catholic Church. Ballendine's wife Caroline Rowland was baptized in the Roman Catholic Church by Father Lestanc on April 10th, 1878 at the age of thirty (PAA, OA, GP, Papiers personnel de J.M. Lestanc

1874-1879, ACC 71.220, Item 6874, Boîte 170). The St. Vital Register further demonstrated an affiliation between the Ballendine family and the St. Vital Parish. Father Hert of the St. Vital Parish laid Peter Ballendine's daughter Mathilde to rest on May 13th, 1880 (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.).

The religious affiliation of Peter Ballendine is uncertain, although local rumor suggests he was of the Protestant faith (Don Light, personal communication 2002). It is possible that Ballendine himself was a non-practicing Protestant, whose family belonged to the Catholic Church. Regardless of his non-Catholic status, Ballendine may have donated a small section of his land to the St. Vital Parish due to his family's involvement in the Catholic Church (Father Mann, personal communication 2003).

3.2.1 The Problematic Homestead Claim of Peter Ballendine

In April 1874, Ballendine purchased an area of land from Joseph Tanner (Kassissoway) on the south side of the Battle River in the settlement of Telegraph Flat. At the time, Ballendine claimed he was not aware that the land he purchased was to become the future townsite of Battleford (SAB, Department of the Interior, Homestead File no. 80979, Claim of Peter Ballendine).

Government Sub-Inspector Edmond Frechette arrived in Battleford on March 25th, 1876. Frechette staked out an area of land on the south side of the Battle River to be developed for the legislative buildings of the new capital and to be used as the townsite of Battleford (McPherson 1967: 37). Problems were encountered when government officials arrived in 1876 to begin construction. Confrontations took place between Hugh Sutherland (Superintendent of Public Works) and Peter Ballendine as Ballendine refused to give up the land he saw as justly belonging to him.

The rush to stake out claims in Battleford led to a serious problem- clashes over land title. And because the official government survey of the townsite was delayed until late in 1882, and that of the surrounding district until 1883 and 1884, litigation became increasingly troublesome. However, during 1876 conflict developed primarily between those occupying land and Superintendent of Public Works Hugh Sutherland, who was responsible for putting up the government buildings. One of the first to be warned off what he claimed was his land by Sutherland was Peter Ballendine, whose acreage was located on the Government Reserve staked out by Frechette (McPherson 1967: 40-41).

Seen as a squatter in the eyes of the government, the construction of the legislative buildings moved forward, while Peter Ballendine was forced to submit a homestead claim for the property that he claimed to be in his right possession. In the correspondence concerning his homestead claim, Ballendine swore that at the time of purchase, he was unaware of the plans to secure a town reserve (SAB, Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Branch, Collection R-182, File number 11263, Claim of Peter Ballendine, First Settler at Battleford, to title for his land [1878-1882]). Ballendine had made the appropriate improvements to his claim, and therefore, felt very strongly regarding his ownership of the aforementioned property. Ballendine submitted a homestead entry for his claim on the eighth of August, 1884. The land he wished to be granted was located within the townsite of Battleford and extended back two miles from the south bank of the Battle River (SAB, Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Branch, Collection R-182, File number 11263, Claim of Peter Ballendine, First Settler at Battleford, to title for his land [1878-1882]).

Peter Ballendine, who was dubbed as “one of the leading men in the community of Battleford”, died on December 12th, 1885 (Light 1987: 18). Peter Ballendine’s death was not recorded in the St. Vital Parish Register, further supporting the idea that Ballendine himself was indeed of the Protestant faith. The location of Peter Ballendine’s

grave was not revealed. Within months after his death, the Land Board awarded the late Peter Ballendine:

Eighty lots on the south side of Battle River, to be taken from those now neither occupied nor applied for at this time, and a homestead of one hundred and sixty acres adjoining the town site on the south (Saskatchewan Herald, 15 February 1886).

In December 1886, the estate of the late Peter Ballendine was put on the tax roll of the Protestant School District of Battleford by the Board of Trustees Court of Revision. The value of Peter Ballendine's estate was listed as \$2890.00 (Saskatchewan Herald, 20 December 1886). The fact that Peter Ballendine's land was put on a tax roll implies that he indeed possessed ownership rights to the land that comprised his estate (Mike Gauthier, personal communication 2003).

Portions of Peter Ballendine's claim were awarded to his wife Caroline Rowland and son James Ballendine on September 25th, 1891 (NAC, RG-15, Interior Series, D-II-1, vol. 426, File 111911, reel T-13124, part 1, South Battleford General File, Map 1882-1925). The 70 lots patented to Mrs. Ballendine and her son were located within the townsite of South Battleford. The adjacent quarter section of land (160 acres) housing the St. Vital Cemetery and located outside of town limits was not awarded to Peter Ballendine's family after his death for unknown reasons.

3.2.2 "Glory Mount": A Planned Subdivision of South Battleford

The portion of land containing the remnants of the St. Vital Cemetery (northwest quarter of section 18, township 43, range 16, west of the third meridian) was later applied for homestead by Charles J. Johnson. Johnson claimed that he and his family began living on the land in question in June 1907. The patent for the quarter section of

land was eventually awarded to Johnson in 1911 (NAC, Western Land Grants, Lib.467, Folio 86, reel C-6312, Charles J. Johnson).

Once the official title to the land was acquired, Johnson planned to add a new subdivision adjacent to South Battleford, which was given the name of "Glory Mount" (Figure 3.3). The land was divided in an urban fashion with streets, blocks, and individual numbered lots. Local surveyor R.C. Laurie devised a map in 1912 outlining the plans for the proposed subdivision.

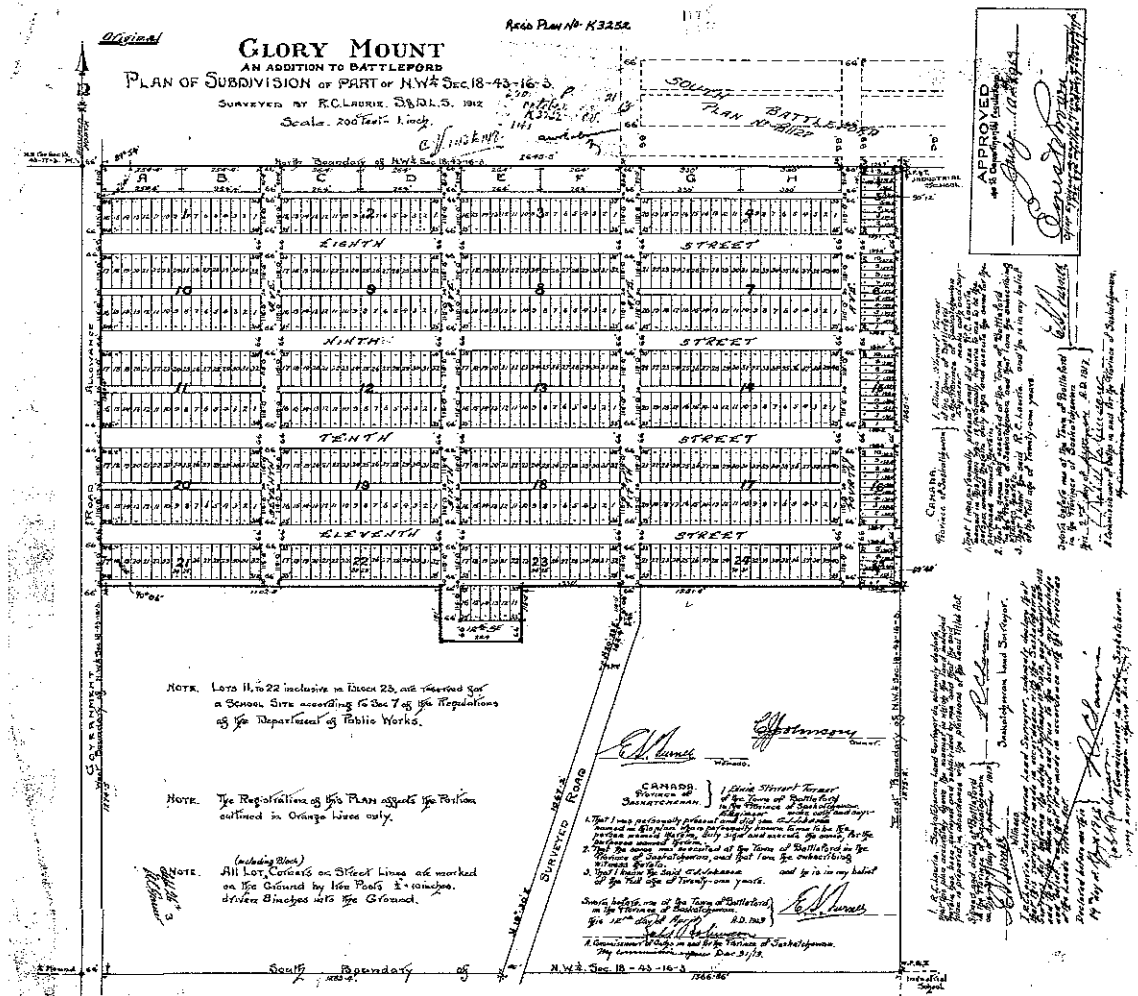


Figure 3.3 Survey of Glory Mount, a planned subdivision of South Battleford. Block 14 on the right denotes the general location of the St. Vital Cemetery (Information Services Corporation, Registered Plan number K3252, Glory Mount-An Addition to Battleford, 1912).

According to Laurie's map, an additional four streets (Eighth to Eleventh Street) were to be added to the southernmost end of South Battleford. In this instance, the St. Vital Cemetery would have been located between Ninth and Tenth Street (running west/ east) and between Fourth and Fifth Avenues (running north/ south) in the new subdivision (see Figure 3.3). Specifically, the St. Vital Cemetery would have been located within block 14 on the survey map devised by Laurie.

It seems rather peculiar that R.C. Laurie completely ignored the location of the St. Vital Cemetery in his survey of Glory Mount, since it was Laurie who initially documented the graveyard's location in 1886. Poor memory hardly functions as a legitimate excuse in this instance. Therefore, an alternative explanation must be responsible for this occurrence (see Chapter Eight).

The proposed subdivision of Glory Mount was approved on July 10th, 1913 (Information Services Corporation, Registered Plan number K3252, Glory Mount- An Addition to Battleford, 1912). The land in question has changed hands a number of times over the years before coming into the possession of the current landowners.

3.2.3 Interment of Non-Catholics in the St. Vital Cemetery

The distinct possibility exists that non-Catholic members of the Battleford community were buried in the St. Vital Cemetery as the St. Vital Parish was the first religious organization to secure a burial ground in the growing settlement. Since the St. Vital Cemetery was the only operating cemetery in Battleford prior to 1884, it was likely that non-Catholics were buried alongside the Roman Catholic parishioners in the St. Vital cemetery (see Chapter Eight for implications). It was at this time that the Battleford Industrial School Cemetery was opened due to the death of a pupil at the school in May of 1884 (Saskatchewan Herald, 31 May 1884). The Battleford Industrial

School was in operation between 1883 and 1914, during which First Nations children from surrounding reserves were shipped to the school to be instructed in marketable skills. The Church of England was responsible for the school's operation (see Wasylyow 1972 for further information concerning the Battleford Industrial School). The Industrial School Cemetery was located in the southeast quarter of section 18, township 43, range 16, west of the third meridian, a very short distance from the Roman Catholic cemetery of St. Vital (Saskatchewan Herald, 31 May 1884).

The practice of burying non-Catholic members of the community in a Catholic cemetery is not unheard of in the Catholic faith,

As it often happened that a Catholic graveyard was the only available place of burial in a large district...in such cases it was possible to allow Protestants to be buried in a consecrated graveyard. In some instances a special portion of ground has been set aside for the purpose and non-Catholic ritual is permitted to be used there. In cases of necessity the Catholic parish priest may preside at such an interment, but he must not use any ritual or prayers that would be recognized as distinctively Catholic (Thurston 2003).

A similar situation was encountered in Calgary, Alberta in the late 1870s. In 1876, the Roman Catholic Mission of Our Lady of Peace established a cemetery, which remained Calgary's sole burial ground for nearly ten years. Due to the lack of a Protestant cemetery, the Protestant population of Calgary was forced to bury their dead in the Catholic cemetery. The Catholic congregation was not overly keen on the burial of Protestants in their cemetery. Yet they still allowed the practice, giving the non-Catholics an unsanctified area of their cemetery in which to bury their dead (Sanders 2002: 1-2).

3.3 The North West Mounted Police Cemetery

Located at the end of 20th Street in the town of Battleford, adjacent to the third chapel of the St. Vital Parish, lies Battleford's North West Mounted Police Cemetery. The cemetery was established in 1885 as a resting-place for local members of the NWMP and victims of the North-West Rebellion (Saskatchewan Herald, 4 February 1888). Battleford resident and St. Vital parishioner Bernard Tremont was the first individual interred in this location. Tremont succumbed to death after a violent attack by a group of neighboring Stonies on March 31st, 1885 (Light 1987: 188, 210). In the presence of numerous townspeople, Tremont's remains were laid to rest by Father Bigonnesse of the St. Vital Parish on April 3rd, 1885 (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). Throughout the progression of events that took place in the Battleford area over the coming weeks, additional victims of the rebellion were interred in the NWMP cemetery (Light 1987).

Although the NWMP cemetery was intended for the burial of rebellion victims and members of the NWMP force, interments of local residents also took place in this location. This included members of the St. Vital Parish. St. Vital parishioners were "interred very close to the church in a temporary cemetery and on the plots of the town and mixed in a way with protestants which occupy a part" (PAA, OA, GP, Bigonnesse-Codex Historicus, ACC 71.220, Item 1895, Boîte 45).

The Prince Albert Diocese possesses a list of those St. Vital parishioners interred in the NWMP or 'temporary' cemetery. In total, this document lists the names of 48 citizens of Battleford, all members of the St. Vital Parish. In addition, the names of four NWMP members are cited. The earliest burial listed on what has been deemed the '1889

List' was that of Bernard Tremont. The burial of two-year old Guillaume Lemire on April 11th, 1889 is the last name cited on this list. His interment represented the final burial of a St. Vital parishioner to take place in the NWMP Cemetery (PADA, SVP, Names of the Catholics who were buried in town lots at Battleford from the 3rd of April 1885 down to the 13th of April 1889).

To reiterate, the NWMP Cemetery was used by the St. Vital Parish between April 3rd, 1885 and April 11th, 1889. Subsequent burials of St. Vital Parishioners took place in the Roman Catholic section of the Town Cemetery. We postulate here that St. Vital parishioners interred prior to April 3rd, 1885 were buried in the St. Vital Cemetery south of the Battle River.

3.3.1 Complaints of the NWMP Concerning the Burials of Battleford Citizens

Throughout the pages of the Saskatchewan Herald, local members of the NWMP often voiced their complaints regarding the interment of townspeople in the NWMP Cemetery. The Mounties consistently urged residents to establish a separate cemetery for their deceased family members. Up to this point, the residents of Battleford had not yet agreed on a location for a cemetery to be used by all parishes operating in the town. An application was made in August 1884 for 80 acres of land lying south of the Battleford Industrial School (southeast quarter of section 18, township 43, range 16, west of the third meridian). This stretch of land was to be used as a common burial ground for all local parishes, including the Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, and the Church of England. Each was to receive 20 acres of land (Saskatchewan Herald, 23 August 1884). The 80 acres of land in question was approved for development in February 1886 and was to be sold to the aforementioned churches for one dollar per acre:

The site selected is admirably suited for the purpose of being dry and convenient, and while too broke (sic) for agricultural or building purposes, presents a diversified surface that makes it easily susceptible of being beautified and converted into an interesting and picturesque burial ground (Saskatchewan Herald, 15 February 1886).

By early 1888, the local churches had yet to act on the generous offer (Saskatchewan Herald, 4 February 1888). Meanwhile, the land comprising the NWMP Cemetery was quickly becoming occupied with the bodies of local townspeople:

Here lies the bodies of those who have died in town for a year or more have been laid; but its extent is very limited, and if used as a place of burial for the dead of the town it will soon be filled and leave no room for the Police, for whom it was especially intended. We are not aware that any objection has been offered to the burial of citizens within the boundaries of the Police graveyard, but it is very evident that it cannot much longer be permitted; and this being the case it behooves our citizens to make provisions otherwise" (Saskatchewan Herald, 4 February 1888).

The NWMP eventually forbade the interment of anyone other than members of the force, thereby forcing Battleford residents to secure a cemetery to be used as the final resting place of their dead (Saskatchewan Herald, 20 March 1889). Less than two weeks later, a meeting was called to discuss the matter at hand. It was decided not to make use of the land originally granted for this purpose, as it was deemed "unsuitable, both as regards to soil and its long distance from the churches" (Saskatchewan Herald, 3 April 1889).

Within days, Battleford resident D.L. Clink made a proposal at a town meeting held on April 8th, 1889. Clink was willing to sell a portion of his land to be used as a cemetery. The land was located northwest of Battleford along the south bank of the North Saskatchewan River. The proposal was accepted and the land was soon surveyed for use as the Town of Battleford Cemetery. Each of the churches was to have a section

of the cemetery to be used for the burial of their own respective parishioners (Saskatchewan Herald, 10 April 1889).

3.4 The Town of Battleford Cemetery

An historic map of the Town of Battleford Cemetery dated to 1910 depicts the layout of burial plots in the Roman Catholic section of the cemetery. The land comprising the extreme northwest corner of the Roman Catholic section was divided and sold as individual burial plots (Figure 3.4). The names of the individuals interred in each of the burial plots are listed on the map (PADA, SVP, Cimetière Catholique, 1910).

The majority of the burial plots in this area measured 10 x 12 feet and were sold for five dollars a piece. On the other hand, some full-sized plots were sectioned into smaller units, measuring three by eight feet and selling for one dollar apiece. The location of individual burials within this area was easily identified upon visiting the cemetery due to the presence of numerous gravestones (PADA, SVP, Cimetière Catholique, 1910).



Figure 3.4 Map of Roman Catholic section of the Town of Battleford Cemetery (Northwest corner). Note individual burial plots (PADA, SVP, Cimetière Catholique, 1910).

3.4.1 Unmarked Graves of St. Vital Parishioners in the Town Cemetery

The northern edge of the Roman Catholic section presented an alternative situation to that observed in the northwest corner. This area was not subdivided and sold as individual burial plots but instead was used as a common burial ground where land was provided free-of-charge. Names of individuals buried in this section are not listed on the cemetery map (PADA, SVP, Cimetière Catholique, 1910). Adult burials in this area were arranged in rows proceeding from west to east, allowing an area measuring three by seven feet for each interment. Infants and children up to the age of seven years were buried in a separate location situated slightly south of the adult burials. Burial plots for this sector of the population were much smaller, measuring 2.5 by 4 feet and were aligned in rows proceeding from west to east (Figure 3.5).

While visiting the Town of Battleford Cemetery, this area is easily identified as it is marked by the virtual absence of gravestones (PADA, SVP, Cimetière Catholique, 1910). This portion of the Roman Catholic section may have been used for the interment of the poor. Commonly referred to as a “Potter’s Field”, this area would have been intended for the burial of “the friendless, the penniless, and the condemned” (Sanders 2002: 5). Biblical references to a “Potter’s Field” were cited in the works of Matthew 27: 7, in which instance temple officials used thirty shekels of silver to open a Potter’s Field, “to bury strangers in”.

Calgary’s Union Cemetery, established in 1890, contains an area where grave markers are absent, yet over a thousand burials are estimated to be interred in this location. This section is located on the outermost fringes of the Union Cemetery away from the burials of Calgary’s privileged population (Sanders 2002: 64-65).

wanted to encourage families to move the remains of their deceased relatives from the NWMP and St. Vital cemeteries to the Town of Battleford Cemetery upon its opening in April 1889 (Sanders 2002: 2).

3.4.2 Movement of Bodies to the Town Cemetery

Once the Town of Battleford Cemetery opened its gates in early 1889, a number of individuals previously interred in other locations were moved to the new burial ground. At times, the local newspaper even advertised these events: “The remains of Mrs. D.L. Clink and Mrs. George I. Clink have been removed from the Mounted Police graveyard and buried in the Presbyterian portion of the new cemetery” (Saskatchewan Herald, 17 April 1889).

According to Father Bigonnesse, the majority of St. Vital parishioners often chose not to disturb the remains of loved ones laid to rest in the NWMP Cemetery, stating that many “have shown much indifference to transporting their dead into the new land purchased for the resting of the dead...rest those who have been buried for a few years, they are well and one need not disturb them” (PAA, OA, GP, Bigonnesse- Codex Historicus, ACC 71.220, Item 1895, Boîte 45).

Deceased members of the St. Vital Parish were among those individuals moved to the Town of Battleford cemetery from their previous burial location. The exhumation and transfer of these burials was not cited in the St. Vital Register itself. However, a number of accounts of such activities were recorded in various publications. In addition, names appearing in the St. Vital Burial Register prior to 1889 were compared to a list of burials of the Town of Battleford Cemetery (TOB, Town of Battleford Cemetery Map, Old Catholic Sections D1, D2, E1, and E2). In each instance that an individual’s name

appeared in both documents, it was evident that exhumation and reburial of that individual had taken place.

For example, St. Vital parishioner and NWMP bugler Patrick Burke was killed at the Battle of Cut Knife Hill during the North-West Rebellion. Burke was originally interred in the NWMP Cemetery alongside his fellow servicemen on May 4th, 1885 (Light 1987: 393, 429). The funeral service was performed by St. Vital's Father Bigonnesse (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). According to documentary sources, the remains of Patrick Burke were disinterred and moved to the town cemetery years after his death for reasons yet unknown (Light 1987: 393). A gravestone demarcating the location of Burke's final resting-place is located in the Roman Catholic Section of the Town of Battleford Cemetery.

A similar scenario surrounded the burial of Joseph "Josie" Alexandre, a member of the St. Vital Parish and Cree interpreter for the NWMP who died of "consumption" (Saskatchewan Herald, 13 September 1886). A gravestone currently lies in the Town of Battleford Cemetery to mark the location of Josie Alexandre's grave. Strangely, Josie Alexandre was interred on the seventh of September, 1886, nearly three years prior to the establishment of the Town of Battleford Cemetery (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). Investigations revealed that Josie Alexandre, like Patrick Burke, was originally interred in the NWMP Cemetery and was later moved to the Roman Catholic Section of the town cemetery. Documentary evidence confirmed this occurrence (Light 1987: 586). In the Roman Catholic Section of the town cemetery, a gravestone marks his place of rest.

Four further instances of exhumation and reburial of St. Vital Parishioners were encountered. Jane Hodgson, daughter of Thomas Hodgson and Marie Alexandre, died at the mere age of two months on March 7th, 1883 (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). According to her father, the young child was “buried in the Catholic Cemetery here in Battleford on the 9th of March, 1883 (NAC, RG-15, Interior Series, Dominion Lands Branch, D-II-8-c, vol.1351, reel C-14975, Claim of Thomas Hodgson, heir to dead daughter Jane Hodgson). Confusion soon arose regarding the burial of Jane Hodgson, as burial records held by the town office indicated that she was buried in the R.C. Section of the Town of Battleford Cemetery in an unmarked grave (TOB, Town of Battleford Cemetery Map, Old Catholic Sections D1, D2, E1, and E2). Assuming both documentary sources demonstrated the fate of the same individual (perhaps there was more than one “Jane Hodgson”), it seems the remains of Jane Hodgson were initially interred in the St. Vital Cemetery before their exhumation and reburial in the Town of Battleford Cemetery (see Chapters Five and Eight for implications). Direct documentation of this event was not recovered.

An interesting situation was encountered concerning the death and subsequent burial of two brothers, William Alexandre and Louis Napoleon Pambrun (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). Father Bigonesse buried William Alexandre Pambrun (an infant of one year and seven months) to rest on the seventh of March, 1884 in the St. Vital Cemetery at Battleford (NAC, RG-15, Interior Series, Dominion Lands Branch, D-II-8-c, vol.1362, reel 14994, Claim of John Pambrun heir to deceased son William Alexander Pambrun). Louis Napoleon Pambrun was laid to rest by Father Bigonesse on February 13th, 1888 at

the age of eight months and 23 days (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). Louis Napoleon Pambrun was listed as being interred in the NWMP Cemetery (PADA, SVP, Names of the Catholics who were buried in town lots at Battleford from the 3rd of April 1885 down to the 13th of April 1889). Strangely, a single gravestone located in the Roman Catholic Section of the Town of Battleford Cemetery marks the common location of their final resting-place. It seems both William Alexandre and Louis Napoleon Pambrun were exhumed from their initial separate burial locations to be reunited in death sometime after the opening of the town cemetery in 1889 (see Chapters Five and Eight for implications). Once again, direct documentation of this event was not recorded.

Lastly, the exhumation and relocation of a fourth individual was evident through the comparison of the St. Vital Parish Register to burial records held by the town of Battleford. The remains of 23 year-old John Cardinal were interred by Father Bigonnesse of the St. Vital Parish on November 24th, 1882. According to the St. Vital Parish Register, Cardinal died 20 miles from Battleford nearly 12 days prior to his interment (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). Assumably, the remains of John Cardinal were interred in the St. Vital Cemetery, as this was the only burial ground in Battleford at that time. Strangely, the name of John Cardinal (also 23 years of age) was listed in the records of the Town of Battleford Cemetery. The grave of John Cardinal is also depicted on a map of the cemetery within the Roman Catholic section (TOB, Town of Battleford Cemetery Map, Old Catholic Sections D1, D2, E1, and E2). It seems as though the remains of John Cardinal were exhumed from the St. Vital Cemetery and reburied in the Roman Catholic

Section of the Town Cemetery after its establishment in April of 1889 (see Chapters Five and Eight for implications).

Due to the abundance of unmarked graves in the Town of Battleford Cemetery, it is likely that a number of St. Vital members were exhumed from their original burial locations and moved to the Town Cemetery upon its opening in April of 1889. Unfortunately the frequency of this occurrence remains unknown.

3.4.3 Why Exhume Human Remains?

One may ask why family members would choose to exhume and move the remains of their deceased relatives years after their death. In modern times, bodies are occasionally exhumed from their final resting place for forensic purposes in order to determine the exact cause of death. This was also true in historic times. A case in 19th-century Battleford comes to mind, when the remains of Joseph A. McDermot were exhumed from the Roman Catholic section of the Town Cemetery as part of the investigation into the man's death in 1897 (Saskatchewan Herald, 4 June 1897). At the time, his wife Sarah McDermot was accused of his murder by poisoning. Examination of the body by a local doctor and a brief trial eventually cleared her name as the verdict in this case was "not guilty" (Saskatchewan Herald, 3 September 1897).

Threats of impending urban development may also impose on family members to move the remains of their deceased relatives, in order to prevent disturbance of the graves by future construction projects (Taylor 2000: 60). Relocation of the dead from their original burial location was also performed for the purpose of reuniting the deceased with other family members, as seemed to be the case for the two young Pambrun children previously mentioned. In other cases, a family planning to move away from a specified location may wish to bring the remains of their loved ones to be

interred near their new place of residence. Neglect and subsequent abandonment of old cemeteries may also prompt next-of-kin to relocate the remains of their deceased relatives (Iserson 1994: 514).

3.5 Summary

Throughout the late 19th-century, the St. Vital Parish made use of three separate cemeteries for the interment of deceased parishioners. The St. Vital Cemetery, located on the south side of the Battle River, was the first to be used by the parish beginning in July 1879. The St. Vital Cemetery, being the only cemetery in the town of Battleford prior to 1884, likely served as the burial ground for a number of outlying settlements and for the burial of non-Catholic members of the community.

With the commencement of the North-West Rebellion in March 1885, the burial ground of St. Vital Parish shifted to the NWMP Cemetery. The NWMP Cemetery proved to be a more convenient location for the interment of St. Vital parishioners, as it was located adjacent to the Roman Catholic parish in the town of Battleford and near the barracks of Fort Battleford (see Chapter Eight).

With the opening of the Town of Battleford Cemetery in April 1889, the burial ground of the St. Vital Parish shifted once again. Burials of St. Vital parishioners from that point onwards took place in the Roman Catholic section of this cemetery.

CHAPTER FOUR

Site Discovery and Methodology

4.1 Cemetery Location

The St. Vital Cemetery (Borden designation FeOb-3) was situated on the south crest of the Battle River, approximately two kilometres south of the present town of Battleford, Saskatchewan (Figure 4.1).

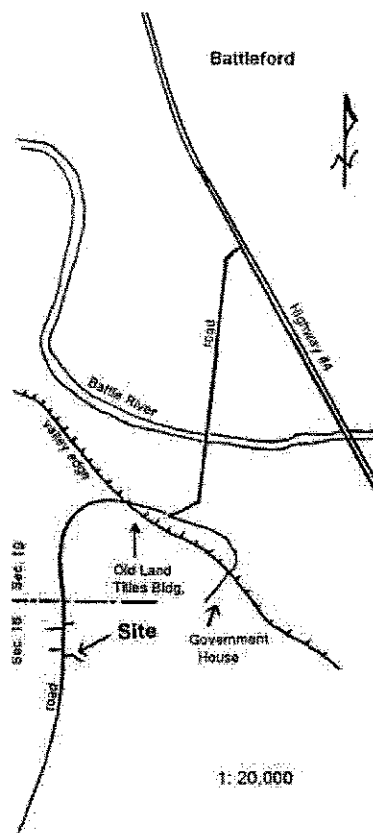


Figure 4.1 Map depicting the location of the St. Vital Cemetery. Map courtesy of the Heritage Branch of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Saskatchewan.

Located in the Rural Municipality of Battle River, the land housing the St. Vital Cemetery comprised the northeast corner of the northwest quarter of section 18, township 43, range 16, west of the third meridian.

The region surrounding the current town of Battleford is situated within the Aspen Parkland ecoregion. The Aspen Parkland extends from Manitoba to Alberta and is characterized by a combination of aspen groves and fescue grasslands (Acton et al 1998: 125). In general, the proportion of wooded area increases as one moves northward, while the prevalence of grasslands increases steadily as one moves towards the southern portion of this transitional ecoregion.

Within the Aspen Parkland lies a stretch of land extending from North Battleford to Maidstone known as the Lower Battle River Plain. The Lower Battle River Plain is typified by sandy soils spotted with groves of trembling aspen, therefore, uncultivated land is common, a large proportion of which is employed as pastureland. Northern portions of the Lower Battle River Plain demonstrate the presence of white spruce (Acton et al 1998: 132).

The land comprising the St. Vital Cemetery lies within the boundaries of this specific landscape area. The sandy soil and trembling aspen typical of the Lower Battle River Plain were visible upon excavation of the cemetery. Due to the prevalence of prairie fires during historic times, it is likely that tree cover was less abundant in this area when the St. Vital Cemetery was employed for interment of the dead in the late 19th-century (Thorpe 1999: 136).

4.1.1 Early Accounts of the St. Vital Cemetery

In a letter addressed to the Battleford's North West Historical Society, former Battleford resident F.C. Bradley described an incident that occurred while he was busy

working for the H.S. Stewart Road Construction Company in 1931. At the time, Bradley was a member of the road crew that was building old Highway Number Four south of Battleford:

We came up the Academy Hill going west and at the top of the hill did a slow curve to the south through the bush. About 200 yards south of the curve was a grassy knoll. About 10 a.m. one morning we started digging into this knoll and an old fellow who lived nearby came along and sat in the shade to watch us. Human bones, Northwest Mounted Police buttons, a clay pipe and pouch along with other artifacts began coming up with the dirt which we discarded to the side of the road. They laid there for some time...I have never met anyone who knew of this burial site, nor did I get the name of the Old Gentleman who came to watch us, no doubt he knew much more than any of us who were working on the Road Gang. On a recent visit to the area, big machinery has removed the whole knoll, the bush is all gone and I found it difficult to pin point exactly where the knoll had been. (Battleford's North West Historical Society, Letter to Don Light and Ross Innes entitled "Just a note for posterity- Desecration of burial sites", May 25th 1996).

Interestingly, the location described by Bradley corresponded to the general location of the St. Vital Cemetery.

Human remains and historic artifacts were discovered adjacent to this location in 1972 after the construction of a new approach leading to the yard of landowner John Lavigne. Cultural materials recovered included several white glass buttons, a silver cross, numerous cranial fragments, and other disturbed skeletal elements. Osteological analysis of the skeletal remains indicated the presence of three individuals, including a female of Native American ancestry (18 to 22 years of age), an adult of undetermined sex (probable Native American ancestry), and the remains of one infant of undetermined age (Dr. Ernie Walker, personal communication 2002). Further investigation with regards to the nature of the disturbed burials was not warranted at this time.

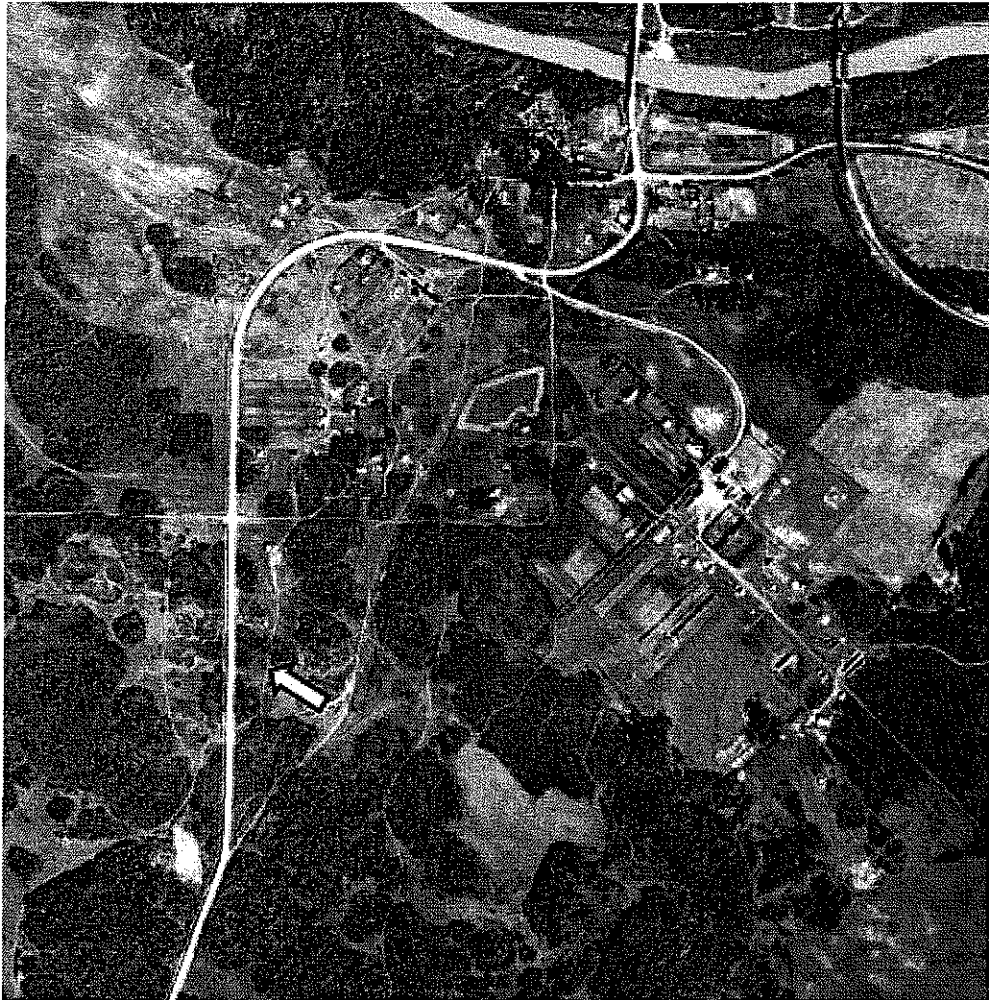


Figure 4.2 Aerial Photograph of NW quarter, Section 18, Township 43, Range 16, West of the third meridian (September 1946). Note location of the St. Vital Cemetery (Information Services Corporation, Aerial Photograph AA 43-171).

It is highly probable that the bone and artifact scatter discovered in 1972 were the remnants of those skeletal and cultural materials discarded to the side of the road by F.C. Bradley and his comrades in 1931.

4.2 Discovery of the St. Vital Cemetery (FeOb-3)

Human remains were once again exposed on the aforementioned property in October 1999 when current landowner Neil Dyck leveled a sandy knoll in his yard in

order to create a ball field for an upcoming family reunion. At this time, the Battlefords' Detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was notified of the discovery. Local law enforcement searched the 50m x 50m site, which led to the discovery of additional human remains and cultural materials. All materials were transported to the Department of Archaeology at the University of Saskatchewan to be examined by Dr. E.G. Walker, who in turn contacted the Archaeological Resource Management Section (ARMS) of the Provincial Government of Saskatchewan.

In the same week, additional searches of the site were conducted by Dr. Walker and members of the RCMP, including the execution of a metal detector search which further facilitated the discovery of various cultural materials dated to the historic period. At this time, it was determined that the disturbed burials were not forensic in nature and were therefore no longer the responsibility of a law enforcement agency.

ARMS became directly involved in the spring of 2000, as the effects of wind erosion had uncovered further evidence of cultural materials, human remains, and remnants of wooden coffins. Shovel testing of various areas of the site uncovered the remains of approximately seven to ten individuals which included the remains of both infants and adults.

Historian Frank Korvemaker performed initial archival research pertaining to the affiliation of the cultural and skeletal materials. Korvemaker determined that the skeletal remains and historic artifacts recovered from the Dyck's farm land may represent the remnants of the cemetery once associated with the St. Vital Parish, a Roman Catholic Mission founded in the winter of 1877.

The critical document depicting the location of the St. Vital Cemetery was retrieved from the field notes of local surveyor R.C. Laurie. The specific location

identified by Laurie in 1886 precisely corresponded to the location of the exposed human remains and cultural materials on the land belonging to the Dyck family (Information Services Corporation, R.C. Laurie, Field Notes Battleford to Swift Current Trail Survey, Field Book 4479, plan no. 447, File no. 754, 1886).

4.3 Site Assessment

Once the affiliation of the discovery was identified, the Battlefords' Tribal Council and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince Albert were contacted. Pauline Ford, archivist for the Diocese of Prince Albert, located and compiled parish records necessary for further proceedings. Among the records provided by the Diocese was the St. Vital Parish Register, which consisted of the baptismal, marital, and burial records for the St. Vital Mission between 1878 and 1890.

Regrettably, a map depicting the arrangement of burial plots in the St. Vital Cemetery did not exist. Any visible surface disturbances caused by the interment of parishioners was obliterated by the effects of wind and previous landscaping of the area in question. In order to become familiar with the nature of the site and the number of potential burials located within its confines, it was decided to use remote sensing as a nondestructive method of investigation (Carlos Germann, personal communication 2001).

4.3.1 Ground Penetrating Radar Survey

In July 2000, the 50m x 50m site was divided into a 2m x 2m grid to prepare for the execution of a GPR survey. Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), a form of remote sensing, involves the use of electromagnetic waves to identify sub-surface disturbances of the soil (Orser and Fagan 1995: 135). Through the use of a transmitter and receiver,

electromagnetic signals are emitted into the soil and are reflected or attenuated upon detection of subsurface disturbances (Davenport 2001: 91-92). The GPR survey of the St. Vital Cemetery helped locate a total of 56 anomalies of low, medium, and high potential, which were subsequently shovel-tested in August 2000 (Figure 4.3).

By the end of the summer of 2000, a total of 18 burial features were identified. Preservation ranged from fully intact coffins with associated human skeletal remains to fragmentary surface scatters of skeletal elements and cultural materials. Two individuals were inhumed directly in the soil without the use of coffins. Most burial features discovered in the summer of 2000 were covered in plastic, backfilled, and marked with pin flags for later excavation. Only burial feature 13 was fully excavated and exhumed at this time (Carlos Germann, personal communication 2001).

With the completion of the GPR survey, the stakeholders (Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince Albert, the Battlefords' Tribal Council, the R.M. of Battle River, and the landowners) were contacted with regards to the treatment of the burial features. Options under consideration included restoration and preservation of the cemetery in its current location or exhumation and relocation of the cemetery assemblage to an appropriate site of reburial.

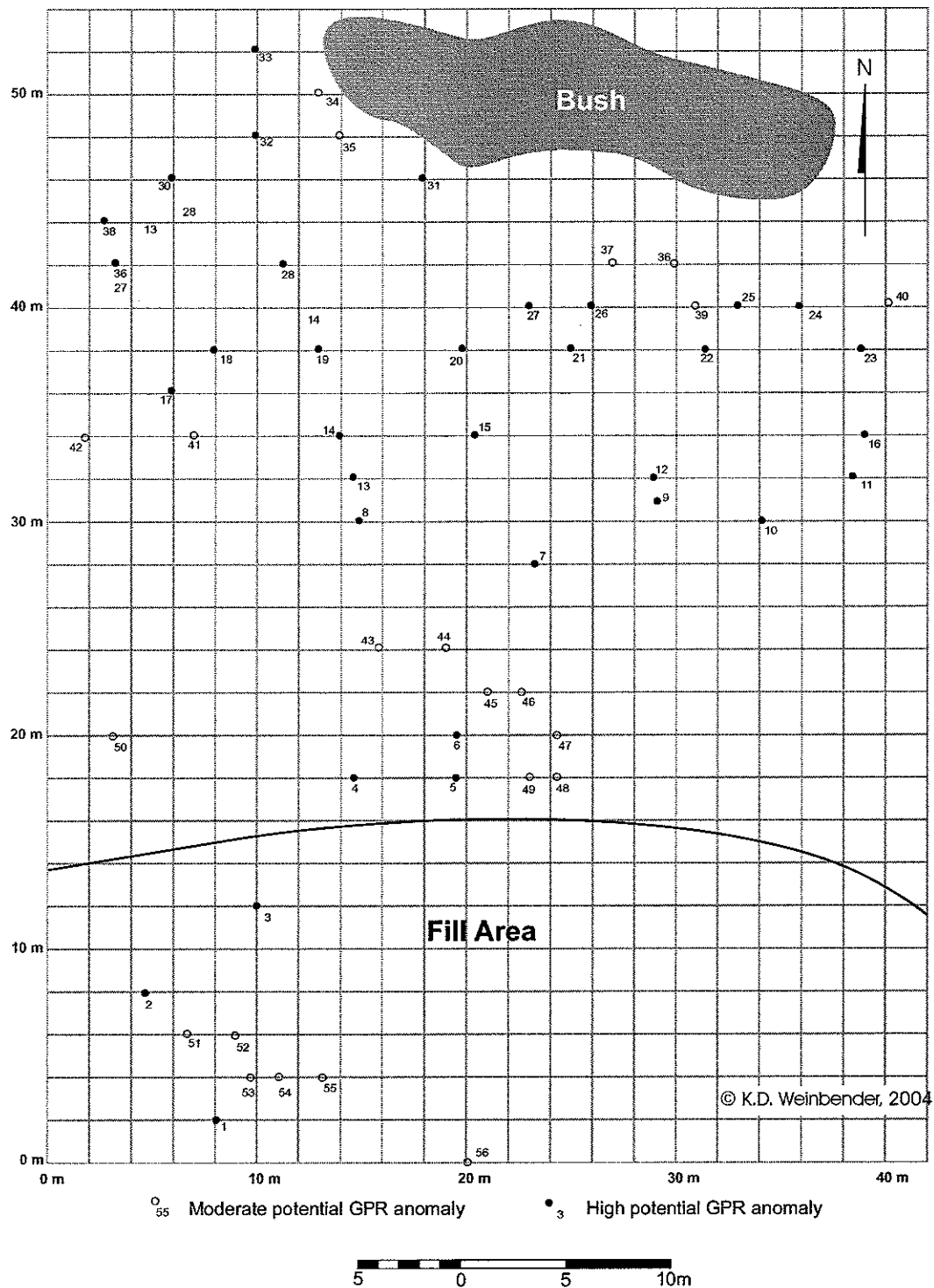


Figure 4.3 Map of the St. Vital Cemetery (GPR Anomalies). Map courtesy of the Heritage Branch of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Saskatchewan and Kim Weinbender.

In order to preserve the cemetery in its present location, extensive landscaping would be necessary and long-term site protection critical. In addition, the Dyck family would be required to forfeit this portion of their land. Conversely, exhumation and relocation of the burials would first involve pinpointing the location the burial features followed by archaeological recovery, osteological analysis of human remains, identification of historic artifacts, and possible contact with living relatives. After careful consideration, the stakeholders unanimously decided to remove and relocate the burials to the Town of Battleford Cemetery, dependent on a reasonable agreement concerning the funding of such a project.

An appropriate research plan was in place by the fall of 2000, whereby the main cost of the excavation was to be shared by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince Albert and the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, while the Rural Municipality (R.M.) of Battle River supplied heavy equipment and operators required for the excavation process. The R.M. of Battle River was also responsible for all aspects of the reburial (Carlos Germann, personal communication 2001). The osteological and historical analyses became the responsibility of the Department of Archaeology at the University of Saskatchewan (Carlos Germann, personal communication 2001).

4.4 Cemetery Excavation

Excavation of the St. Vital Cemetery began in June 2001 for one week's time and later continued in August of the same year. The excavation began by shovel-testing high-potential GPR anomalies and uncovering previously discovered burial features. This process continued through the use of trowel excavation for individual burial features.

Overburden was removed through the use of shovels. Trowels were then substituted once the burial feature was visible in order for more careful excavation. Once the entire coffin lid was exposed, a trench was dug around three edges of the coffin for ease of excavation. The lid of the coffin was then removed and discarded, as was the wood along the exposed side in order to grant easier access to the human remains within the coffin (Figure 4.4). Excavation of the coffin's contents involved the use of numerous implements, including paint brushes, dental explorers, trowels, and toothbrushes. Soil from the inner contents of the coffins was removed and placed in a dustpan for brief examination before it was discarded.

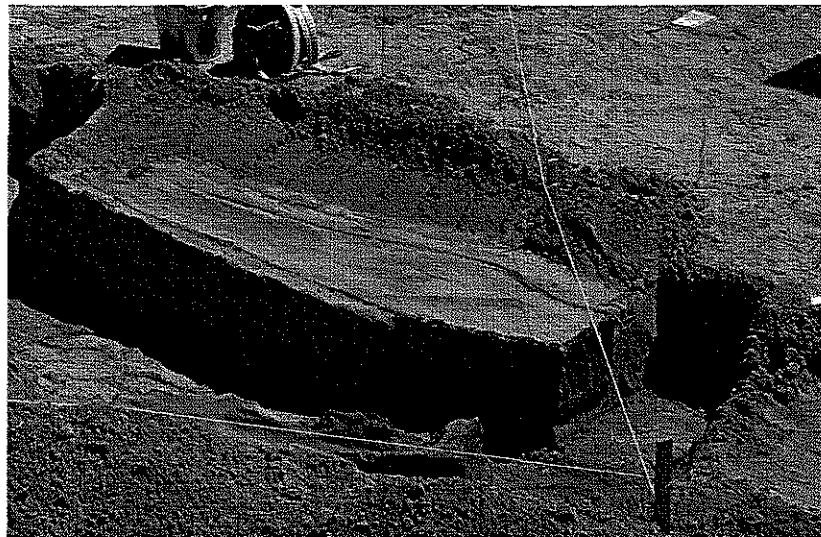


Figure 4.4 Example of excavation methodology practiced at the St. Vital Cemetery excavation. Photograph courtesy of the Heritage Branch of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Saskatchewan.

Pertinent information regarding each individual burial feature was recorded on individual burial description forms developed by fellow graduate student Treena Swanston (Swanston 2003). On these forms, the coordinates of the burial features were recorded according to their location within the 50m x 50m grid and the orientation of the burial features was documented. Furthermore, the depth of the burial was noted (depth

below surface) as was the coffin's dimensions (length x width x depth); all measurements were taken in centimeters (cm). Additional data were recorded including: burial position (extended or flexed), orientation of the skeletal remains, completeness of the skeletal remains, degree of preservation and articulation, position of the hands, initial observations pertaining to the sex and age of the human skeletal remains, as well as the presence and location of cultural materials relative to the skeletal remains. Sketches of each individual burial feature were also included on the burial description forms. Most importantly, the excavation of all burial features was well documented through the use of photography, whereby all aspects of the multi-step excavation process were photographed in detail.

Once all excess soil was removed from the interior of the coffin, the burial feature and associated human skeletal remains were photographed prior to disarticulation. Skeletal elements were carefully bagged and labeled according to burial feature number, skeletal element, and side of the body from which the element belonged for ease of sorting in a laboratory setting. Associated cultural materials, fabric swatches, and wood samples were bagged separately. All bags containing skeletal and cultural materials were boxed according to the burial feature from which they were retrieved.

4.4.1 Mechanical Excavation

An auger was used in June 2001 to test the low-potential GPR anomalies after which mechanical methods of excavation were pursued. Mechanical excavation of the site first involved the use of a front-end loader, whereby the surface of the soil was scraped in small increments until human remains, coffin wood or cultural materials were visible. Throughout this process, one member of the field crew alerted the backhoe operator upon discovery of any such materials and the burial feature was excavated as

described in Section 4.6. Through these methods, three burial features (features 22, 23, and 24) were discovered in June 2001. The decision was made to cover the additional burial features with plastic with the intention of returning for additional excavation of the site.

Further mechanical excavation of the St. Vital Cemetery in August 2001 (using methodology previously described) led to the discovery of an additional six burial features. As a last resort, the entirety of the 50m x 50m site was trenched using a backhoe to an estimated depth of eight feet as a final method of exploration (Figure 4.5).



Figure 4.5 Mechanical trenching performed at the St. Vital Cemetery. Photograph courtesy of the Heritage Branch of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Saskatchewan.

4.4.2 Number of Individuals Recovered

In total, the remains of 30 individuals were identified. Six individuals were represented by surface bone scatter, while 24 individuals were identified as intact burial features. Human skeletal remains were not retrieved from the coffins of burial features

5C and 16. Of the 26 burial features, eleven were discovered through the use of GPR, six were uncovered accidentally, and nine were discovered through mechanical means of excavation. The preceding figures demonstrated the fallibility of GPR in cemetery excavations, indicating that the need for additional excavation of the site through mechanical means was indeed warranted.

4.5 Laboratory Analysis

Skeletal remains and cultural materials were transported to the Department of Archaeology at the University of Saskatchewan, where all bags containing skeletal remains were separated from those containing cultural materials. At this point, the research responsibilities of the cemetery excavation were divided into two separate research entities. Analysis of all skeletal materials was entirely the responsibility of fellow graduate student Treena Swanston (see Swanston 2003 for further details).

The method used for cleaning all cultural materials was dependent on the material type of the artifact. Artifacts were first cleaned and catalogued by the author, after which they were classified according to function following the methodology outlined by Sprague (1981). All artifacts were placed into functional categories keeping in mind the burial context of these items (see Chapter Six).

4.6 Archival Research and Interviews

The investigation concerning the St. Vital Cemetery relied heavily on archival research in order to gain a better understanding of Battleford's early history and the history of the St. Vital Parish. Important genealogical information regarding the families

belonging to St. Vital Parish was also gathered from various primary and secondary sources.

Early archival research performed by Frank Korvemaker was used as the starting point of further archival investigations concerning the St. Vital Cemetery and associated Roman Catholic Parish. Archives examined by the author included those housed at the National Archives of Canada, Oblate Grandin Province Archives (Provincial Archives of Alberta), Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan Archives Board, and records held by the town office in Battleford, Saskatchewan. The author personally visited the aforementioned archives on a number of occasions throughout the course of this research.

Critical analysis of documentary sources, whether primary or secondary in nature, was imperative in the collection of archival information because a single version of historical events is not mutually exclusive, requiring that the past be understood in its own terms (DeMallie 1993). For example, the Saskatchewan Herald was consulted on numerous occasions for general information regarding daily life in 19th-century Battleford. However, all information gleaned from this historic newspaper was approached with caution, as documentary sources are by no means mirror images of the past (DeMallie 1993). In this case, articles recounting local events were inherently biased by editor P.G. Laurie.

A similar critical approach was employed while gathering pertinent historical information through the use of informal interviews. Information regarding Catholic burial practices, St. Vital Parish History, and events surrounding the abandonment of the St. Vital Cemetery was gleaned from interviews with Father Rowland Gaudet (Diocese of Prince Albert) and Father Leo Mann (Provincial Superior for the Oblates of St.

Mary's Province). Local historian Don Light was interviewed on numerous occasions for his perspectives on life in 19th-Century Battleford and vast knowledge of local family histories.

4.6.1 Critical Analysis of the St. Vital Parish Register

Prior to its acceptance as a reliable documentary source, the St. Vital Parish Register was subjected to critical analysis to test its suitability for use. According to Saunders (Saunders et al 1995: 111), "Documentary data sets, such as parish records, often contain biases, so they must not be accepted at face value but be carefully scrutinized for accuracy". The procedural outline for such an analysis was adapted from Drake (1974). Drake suggests examining parish records for a number of features such as gaps in the parish register, number of entries per year, the effect of changes in record keepers, and the amount of detail recorded in each entry. The parish records should also be examined for evidence that individuals interred in other locations are appropriately labelled.

Prior to the analysis of the parish records, translation of this document was necessary as the entirety of their contents were written in French. The translation of the St. Vital Parish Register was accomplished by the author. Examination of the St. Vital Parish Register demonstrated the suitability of this document for research purposes. Only those records recorded between 1878 and 1885 were subjected to analysis.

Gaps in the parish records were minor and seemed to correspond to tumultuous times, such as those encountered during the North-West Rebellion. For example, only a single entry was made in the St. Vital Parish Register for the months of April (n=1) and May (n=1), 1885. Only two entries are listed on the pages of the register for the month of June of the same calendar year. Battleford residents were confined to Fort Battleford,

which led to the complete disruption of daily life. It is not surprising, therefore, that entries in the St. Vital Register were sparse at this time.

According to Drake (1974), the reliability of parish records is doubtful if the number of entries per year is less than one hundred. The number of entries in the St. Vital Parish Register rarely exceeded fifty entries per year between 1878 and 1885. A similar situation was encountered in the analysis of parish records associated with the St. Thomas Cemetery located in Belleville, Ontario (Rogers 1991). In the first twenty years of the cemetery's use, fewer than 100 entries were recorded on an annual basis. In this case, Rogers attributed the lack of entries to the small size of the parish in the first twenty years of its operation (Rogers 1991: 14). This was likely the case for the St. Vital Register, where the population of the town of Battleford itself had only reached 100 by the start of the 1880s (PAA, OA, GP, Bigonnesse- Historique de la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford 1877-1901, ACC 71.220, Item 1895, Boîte 45).

The successive parish priests of the St. Vital Parish acted as the primary record keepers. Between 1878 and 1885, Father Lestanc, Father Hert, and Father Bigonnesse recorded the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church performed on their behalf, including baptism, marriage, First Communion, Confirmation, and funerary services. Gaps in the parish records did not seem to correspond to changes in record keepers. Regardless of the identity of the record keeper, a similar amount of detail was provided for each individual entry. With regard to burial information, the cause of death was never revealed in the parish records. For the most part, information included in the burial descriptions consisted of the following: name and age of the deceased; names of the parents; names of witnesses to the interment; and the signature of the parish priest responsible for performing the funerary service. The sex of the deceased was often

inferred from the notation “son of” and “daughter of” used in the description of the funerary service (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.).

The location of individual graves was not revealed in the St. Vital Parish Register unless the burial took place out of town. For instance, a young girl by the name of Suzanne was said to be buried on the Moosemin Reserve in November of 1883 (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). In this case, the burial of this individual was discounted in the comparison of the demographic information provided by parish records and skeletal analysis of the human remains recovered from the cemetery excavations, as this individual was never interred within the confines of the St. Vital Cemetery. In other cases, the location of individual burials had to be inferred from a host of other documentary sources (see Chapter Three).

Despite its flaws, the St. Vital Parish Register proved its suitability for use as a reliable documentary source. Gaps in the record were small and the information recorded in each entry was relatively consistent over time. The information provided by the St. Vital Parish Register proved to be invaluable to the archaeological investigation of the St. Vital Cemetery.

CHAPTER FIVE

Individual Burial Descriptions of the St. Vital Burial Assemblage

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter consists of general burial descriptions for each burial feature identified from the St. Vital Cemetery. Appropriate nomenclature and a classificatory scheme for the purposes of burial description were adopted from that described by Sprague (1968: 483). An effort was made to include detailed data in each burial description. However, due to time constraints with regard to the excavation of the site small discrepancies exist in the detail of information recorded and samples collected. With regard to coffin construction, dimensions are listed in the text of this chapter as follows: length x width x coffin depth and depth below surface (dbs). Specific references were made regarding measurements not taken for each of the individual burial features.

Details concerning artifact surface scatters were not included in this chapter, as comprehensive descriptions of these cultural materials are discussed in Chapter Six. A general inventory of the individuals identified from the surface scatter is found in Table 5.1. For the entirety of this chapter, fellow graduate student Treena Swanston provided demographic information with reference to the burial population (age, sex, and ancestry). For further information pertaining to the human skeletal materials retrieved from the St. Vital Burial assemblage see Swanston (2003).

Table 5.1 General Inventory of the Skeletal Surface Scatter (n=6)

Surface Scatter	Age of the Individual Represented
SS1	5 years
SS2	3 years
SS3	12-15 years
SS4	40 weeks
SS5	3 months
SS6	2 years

5.2 Description of Burial Features

5.2.1 Burial Feature 2

Burial feature 2 was first discovered in August 2000 at grid position 35N/ 9E with the exposure of what appeared to be the outline of a wooden box (see Figure 5.3). Excavation of this feature in June 2001 revealed the presence of a small circular feature (29cm x 29cm, surface) resembling a possible leather bag (Carlos Germann, personal communication 2001). The feature was removed as an intact unit and transported to the laboratory for further analysis.

Upon examination in the laboratory, it was evident that the skeletal remains associated with burial feature 2 were placed on the left side with the legs tucked up beneath the body. At this time, it was also apparent that the material enveloping the individual had disintegrated, suggesting the bag was not composed of leather as initially suspected but perhaps was made of moss (see Chapter Seven). Three machine-cut nails were recovered from this feature, although it is unsure whether the nails were directly associated with feature 2 or simply part of the surface collection due to their close proximity to the surface of the soil. No cultural materials were recovered and the absence of fabric was noted.

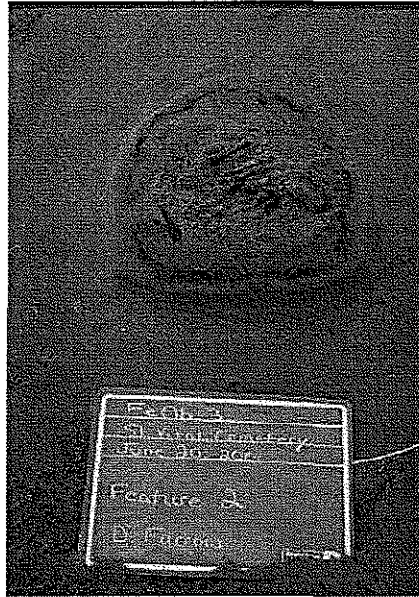


Figure 5.1 Burial feature 2 in situ. Photograph courtesy of the Heritage Resource Branch of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Saskatchewan.

The human skeletal remains associated with burial feature 2 were of one of the youngest individuals recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery at the age of 32 fetal weeks (Swanston 2003).

5.2.2 Burial Feature 4

The fragmentary remains of burial feature 4, located at grid position 32.5N/ 18E, were uncovered accidentally in August 2000 as a result of their close proximity to the surface of the soil (Figure 5.3). The shape of the coffin was obliterated due to the highly disturbed nature of the burial, and measurements were approximated (50cm x 54cm, depth not recorded, surface). The coffin itself was constructed of white spruce (*Picea glauca*) and machine-cut nails and was ornamented on its exterior with composite tacks. Remnant fabric was visible under a number of tacks. However, the small swatches of

fabric were not retained for analysis. No cultural materials were recovered. Evidence of burial garments was completely lacking from the burial of this individual.

Age-at-death assessment of the human remains associated with burial feature 4 was consistent with the remains of a 4-year-old child (Swanston 2003).

5.2.3 Burial Feature 5

Carlos Germann (ARMS) first discovered burial feature 5 in May 2000, with subsequent excavations taking place in June 2001. Located at grid position 37-38N/ 27-28E (see Figure 5.3), burial feature 5 consisted of a single burial pit and contained what appeared to be the remains of 2 infant coffins referred to henceforth as features 5A and 5C, and one coffin lid (5B). Although unlikely, it was plausible that feature 5B represented the disturbed remains of a third wooden coffin. However, for our purposes feature 5B will be treated as a coffin lid. Upon excavation, it was evident that feature 5C was interred below feature 5A, with feature 5B lying to the west of 5A.

Features 5A and 5C were rectangular in shape and oriented NE/SW to N/S. Coffin dimensions were as follows: Feature 5A: 90cm x 24cm x 16cm and Feature 5C: 95cm x 34.5cm x 14cm; depth below surface was not recorded. Machine-cut and wire nails were collected from feature 5A in May 2000 (Carlos Germann, personal communication 2001). Dimensions for feature 5B were also taken (98cm x 40cm x 5cm).

Both features 5A and 5C were adorned with composite tacks. Fabric was visible under the tacks. However, a sample was not retained for analysis. Wood samples were not retained for analysis. Cultural materials were absent, although a small sample of charcoal was recovered and a number of machine-cut nails were collected.

Osteological analysis of the single skeletal element (femur) retrieved from burial feature 5A was from an individual of 32 fetal weeks. Feature 5C lacked the presence of human skeletal remains (Swanston 2003). The human remains once housed within the empty coffins associated with burial features 5A and 5C were likely exhumed and moved to another burial location.

5.2.4 Burial Feature 7

The complete skeletal remains of burial feature 7 were discovered in August 2000 through the use of GPR and subsequent testing of GPR anomaly #13, located at grid position 32-33.5N/ 14-15E (see Figure 5.3). Excavation of feature 7 took place in June 2001. The individual was interred in a tapered coffin (182 cm x 44 cm x 25cm, dba not recorded) constructed of white spruce (*Picea glauca*) lying in an extended position with the arms crossed on the pelvis and oriented in a NE/SW direction; the head of the individual was directed to the northeast. Coffin hardware consisted of slotted screws and both machine-cut and wire nails. Preserved fabric was recovered from the interior of the coffin. The sample was too desiccated for weave determination. Fabric was also retrieved from the exterior of the coffin, which indicated that the coffin itself was fabric covered, although no brass or composite tacks were visible. A sample of the fabric was not retained for analysis. In this case, no cultural materials were recovered.

Sex and age determination performed by Swanston (2003) identified the individual as a female over the age of 60 of possible Native American ancestry.

5.2.5 Burial Feature 8

Burial feature 8 was discovered in August 2000 at grid location 48.5N/ 10E (Anomaly #32) through the use of GPR (see Figure 5.3). Excavation of feature 8 took place in June 2001. Interred in a rectangular coffin (164cm x 42cm x 25cm, 10-20cm dbs), the individual was found lying in an extended position, oriented NE/SW with the head facing southwest. The coffin itself was constructed of white spruce (*Picea glauca*) and mostly ferrous machine-cut nails, although one wire nail was discovered. Cultural materials retrieved from the interior of the coffin included a portion of a ferrous belt buckle and associated fragments of leather, some of which possessed perforations indicative of their function as a belt. In addition, numerous white glass (four-hole) buttons were collected. A small sample of preserved fabric was identified as silk (plain 2/2 twill weave) through microscopy and burn analysis.

Unfortunately, skeletal analysis confirmed an age range of 10 to 12 years, whereas sex determination was impossible due to the young age of the deceased (Swanston 2003). Extensive disturbance of the bones in the thoracic region of the skeleton was noted which likely occurred as a result of rodent activity.

5.2.6 Burial Feature 10

The complete skeletal remains of burial feature 10 were discovered in August 2000 through the use of GPR and subsequent testing of anomaly #17 located at grid location 37N/ 6.5-7E (see Figure 5.3). Feature 10 was excavated in June 2001. Despite the poor preservation of the wood (unidentifiable species), the shape of the coffin was clearly of the tapered variety (170cm x 40cm x 25cm, 35-60cm dbs) with ferrous machine-cut nails serving as the coffin hardware. The individual was interred in an

extended position with the arms crossed on the pelvis, oriented NE/SW with the cranium directed to the southwest. The discovery of two desiccated wooden posts, one located on each side of the cranial end of the coffin, suggested the possible remnants of a wooden burial marker.

A variety of cultural materials were recovered from feature 10, including numerous seed beads (ca. 10420 dark shadow blue, ca. 7280 opaque white, 69 brite blue, and 15 light yellow), brass beads on a leather cord, fragments of a leather belt, and brite copan blue wire-wound beads. All seed beads were recovered from the lower legs and feet. Due to remarkable *in situ* preservation, the decorative pattern on the lower legs was visible, consisting of alternating vertical lines of dark shadow blue and opaque white seed beads. Brass ball buttons were positioned in single vertical rows on the lateral sides of the lower legs of the individual. A small swatch of leather was also retrieved from the same general area. The observed pattern of seed beads, leather, and associated brass ball buttons suggests that the individual was possibly wearing leggings upon interment (see Chapter Seven).

A highly desiccated fabric sample was collected which was identified as a woolen fabric of unknown weave. In addition, a small perforated shell was discovered near the right side of the cranium, perhaps used as a pendant for a necklace. Two opaque white glass (four-hole) buttons (one with fuchsia shoulder) were also found along with wooden matchsticks.

Osteological analysis of the remains associated with burial feature 10 was consistent with the remains of a 20 to 25 year old female of possible Native American ancestry (Swanston 2003).

5.2.7 Burial Feature 11

The discovery of burial feature 11 was accomplished through the use of GPR and subsequent investigation of anomaly #9. The burial was first discovered in August 2000 and later excavated in June 2001. Located at grid position 30N/ 29E (see Figure 5.3), the individual was interred in a rectangular coffin (193cm x 48cm x 19cm, dbs not recorded) and was oriented in a NW/SE direction; the head of the individual was directed to the northwest. The individual was lying in an extended position with the arms crossed on the pelvis within a coffin constructed of white spruce (*Picea glauca*), machine-cut nails, and slotted screws. The coffin was highly ornamented with brass tacks, which encircled its perimeter on both the superior and inferior edges, in addition to the two rows of tacks on its lid both aligned parallel to the long axis of the coffin.

Two layers of fabric recovered from underneath the tacks were analyzed and identified as brown wool (4/1 satin weave) and white cotton (balanced plain weave [1/1]) through burn analysis and microscopy, indicating that the coffin was encased in two layers of fabric. In general, the fabric preservation observed with the coffin of feature 11 was astonishing. The remains of a silk scarf were still tied around the neck of the individual. Preservation of various cottons and woolens was also notable (see Chapter Six).

Numerous artifacts were recovered as part of the burial contents of feature 11. These included remnants of footwear represented by various seed beads and leather (covered with red ochre) that enveloped the feet, an unidentifiable religious medallion and cross (found in close proximity to the neck), brass wire coils, one opaque white glass (four-hole) button with a fuchsia shoulder, four-hole shell buttons, as well as a number of composite snap-closure buttons. One brass ball button was also collected. In

addition, the discovery of a pocket-knife, wooden matches, a vulcanized rubber comb, and a clay pipe hidden together within remnant fabric near the individual's left inominate was suggestive of their location within a coat pocket at the time of interment.

Overall, the cultural materials recovered from burial feature 11 suggested that the burial garments in this case consisted of a shirt, jacket, pants, moccasins, and silk scarf, which was tied around the neck of the associated individual.

Upon osteological analysis, it was evident that the complete skeletal remains associated with burial feature 11 were consistent with that of a 20 to 24 year old male of possible Native American ancestry (Swanston 2003).

5.2.8 Burial Feature 12

The complete skeletal remains associated with burial feature 12 were discovered in August 2000 through the use of GPR and subsequent testing of anomaly #30 at grid position 47N/ 6E (20-30cm dbs). Oriented NE/SW with the cranium directed towards the northeast, the human skeletal remains associated with burial feature 12 were interred without a coffin (see Figure 5.3). The individual was lying on his back in a semi-flexed position, his arms extended along the sides of his torso (Figure 5.2).

Upon excavation of burial feature 12 in June 2001, it was evident that the individual was inhumed with a number of interesting artifacts including a metal-backed mirror inscribed "E.P. à Paris", an unidentified ferrous artifact (cup?), a black fabric cap (balanced plain weave, black cotton fibers) with a leather brim and an unidentified brass artifact found near the right side of the cranium. A small sample of tobacco was also retrieved from the burial. Additional artifacts collected from burial feature 12 included a primary platform rejuvenation flake of silicified siltstone, a small fragment of leather, as

well as three opaque white glass (four-hole) buttons. The presence of the small buttons suggested that the individual was wearing a shirt upon interment. Due to preservation issues, the remainder of the burial garments was not visible upon excavation of burial feature 12.



Figure 5.2 Burial feature 12 in situ. Photograph courtesy of the Heritage Resource Branch of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Saskatchewan.

Skeletal indicators of the cranium and pelvis were used to determine the sex of the individual as male and placed the age at death between 25 and 30 years of age. The individual was likely of Native American ancestry (Swanston 2003).

5.2.9 Burial Feature 13

The skeletal remains associated with burial feature 13 were discovered and collected by Dr. Ernest G. Walker and the Battlefords' Detachment of the R.C.M.P. in

October 1999 at grid position 44.5N/ 4.5E (see Figure 5.3). The orientation of the individual was not recorded at this time.

Upon excavation, it was clear that the nearly complete skeletal remains (Swanston 2003) were interred in a flexed position lying on the right side. A coffin was not used in the interment of this individual. The absence of both cultural materials and fabric was noted.

Osteological analysis of the human skeletal remains associated with this feature led to an age-at-death assessment of 9 years (Swanston 2003).

5.2.10 Burial Feature 14

Burial feature 14 was discovered in August 2000 through the use of GPR and subsequent testing of anomaly #19, located at grid position 37.5-39.5N/ 12-13E (see Figure 5.3). Excavation of feature 14 took place in June 2001. The individual was interred in a tapered coffin (195cm x 55cm x 25cm, dbs not recorded), lying in an extended position with arms along the sides of the torso and oriented in a NE/SW direction. The head of the individual was directed to the northeast. The coffin itself was constructed of white spruce (*Picea glauca*). However, a sample of nails was not collected. Interestingly, the coffin was lined with a layer of bark shavings (see Chapter Seven for significance).

Entirely enveloped with a hide, the individual was wearing a leather belt complete with ferrous buckle and was buried along with a wooden picture frame, a reddish-brown clay pipe, wooden matches, tobacco, and two strings of alternating brass beads and coils with horse hair extending from one end of each piece. These cultural

materials were positioned superior to the cranium in what appeared to be a bundle (see Chapter Seven for significance).

Aside from the presence of a hide, preserved fabric was also retrieved from burial feature 14, which was identified as wool (balanced plain weave) through the use of microscopy and burn analysis.

Lastly, the complete skeletal remains associated with burial feature 14 were subjected to osteological analysis, the results being consistent with that of a 17 to 19 year old male of possible Native American ancestry (Swanston 2003).

5.2.11 Burial Feature 15

The use of GPR and subsequent testing of anomaly #18 in August 2000 led to the discovery of burial feature 15 at grid position 38-40N/ 8-9E (see Figure 5.3). Feature 15 was later excavated in June 2001.

Oriented in a NE/SW direction with the cranium directed towards the southwest, the tapered coffin (86cm x 50cm x 22cm, dba not recorded) was constructed with unidentifiable wood (poor preservation). Nails were not collected from this burial feature. The complete skeletal remains were found lying in an extended position with the hands crossed on the pelvis.

The coffin was highly ornamented with numerous brass tacks located every 10 to 15 cm along the perimeter of the lid and extending down along the side seams of the coffin. Cultural materials recovered from feature 15 included the following: fragments of a ferrous overall buckle, 5 opaque white glass (four-hole) buttons (four with royal blue shoulders, one with a decorated shoulder), one four-hole button of unidentified metal, and one unidentified metal artifact. In total, three fabric swatches were identified.

These included two samples of a cotton-wool blend (weave unidentified) and one woolen sample of unidentifiable weave. Interestingly, samples of red ochre were collected from both iliae as well as from the anterior portion of the sacrum. Based on the cultural materials and fabric retrieved from the coffin, it appeared as though the individual associated with burial feature 15 was clad in a shirt, overalls, and a possible jacket for the purposes of interment.

The results of the osteological analysis of the skeletal remains associated with burial feature 15 were consistent with the remains of an 18 to 20 year old male of possible Native American ancestry (Swanston 2003).

5.2.12 Burial Feature 16

Burial feature 16 was unearthed at grid location 44-45N/ 1-2.5E in August 2000 and was associated with GPR anomaly #29 (see Figure 5.3). The excavation of burial feature 16 followed in June 2001.

The coffin was rectangular in shape (152cm, no width recorded, 30cm, dba not recorded) and oriented NE/SW. Upon excavation of feature 16 it was apparent that the coffin was empty. Based on the size of the coffin, it was likely that feature 16 represented the remnants of a previously exhumed adult burial. Cultural materials were absent. Nails were not collected and a sample of wood was not retained for analysis.

5.2.13 Burial Feature 17

Burial feature 17, associated with GPR anomalies # 26 and #37, was uncovered in August 2000 at grid location 40-42N/ 26-28E (see Figure 5.3). After excavation of the burial feature in June 2001, it was revealed that the individual was buried in an extended

position with the hands crossed on the pelvis, oriented NE/SW with the cranium directed towards the southwest. Wood shavings (some of which were burned) and straw were used to line the interior of the coffin (see Chapter Seven for significance).

Unlike any other burial feature at the site, the individual was interred within a tapered coffin (186cm x 56cm x 36cm, dbs not recorded), which was in turn buried within a large rectangular box (208cm x 63cm, depth not recorded, 40-70cm dbs). At the cranial end, wood planks were placed perpendicular to the long axis of the coffin. Machine-cut nails and unidentifiable wood (poor preservation) were used in the construction of the inner tapered coffin; details of the construction of the outer rectangular box remain unknown as samples of nails and wood were not collected. Interestingly, the inner coffin itself was decorated in a peculiar manner, whereby the wood was etched with cuts perpendicular to the grain at the level of the coffin's hinge. No other coffin was comparable in decoration of this type.

Excavation of burial feature 17 revealed an abundance of cultural materials, such as a ferrous overall buckle, numerous buttons of shell and opaque white glass (all four-hole), several composite snap-closure buttons, and an unidentified brass artifact. The preservation of fabric was also noted. Through the use of burn analysis and microscopy, fabric samples were identified. These included woolens of various weaves (unbalanced and balanced plain weaves [1/1] and plain 2/2 twill), and a single sample of unidentified cellulose fibers (balanced plain weave [1/1]). Cultural materials and preserved fabric from the contents of the coffin indicated that the individual associated with burial feature 17 was likely wearing overalls, a shirt, and a jacket upon interment at the St. Vital Cemetery. The recovery of the right mandible of an immature Northern Pocket Gopher

(*Thomomys talpoides*) from the contents of feature 17 served as evidence of rodent disturbance.

The human skeletal remains representative of burial feature 17 were identified as belonging to that of a male between the ages of 30 and 40 years. The individual was likely of Native American ancestry (Swanston 2003).

5.2.14 Burial Feature 18

Burial feature 18 was discovered through the use of GPR and subsequent testing of anomaly #38 (41-42.5N/ 2.5-4E) in August 2000 (see Figure 5.3). Excavation of feature 18 took place in June 2001.

Oriented NE/SW with the cranium directed to the southwest, the individual was interred in a tapered coffin (172cm x 44cm x 22cm, 58cm dbs) highly ornamented with brass tacks. The tacks were positioned every 10 cm around the perimeter of the coffin. Within the poorly preserved coffin, the individual was lying in an extended position with the hands crossed on the pelvis. A sample of wood and nails used in the construction of the coffin were not recovered from this burial feature.

Cultural materials recovered from burial feature 18 were noteworthy, as they consisted solely of religious items. Most notably, a rosary composed of a brass cross, wooden beads, and a Miraculous Medallion was discovered slightly inferior to the pelvis between the femora of the individual. In addition, two religious medallions were collected from the burial, both of which were identified as medallions of Saint Benedict (see Chapter Six). Fabric samples recovered from burial feature 18 were cumulatively identified as reddish-brown cotton (balanced plain weave [1/1]). No further indications of burial garments were recovered.

The skeletal materials associated with burial feature 18 were those of a female between the ages of 30 and 35 years of possible Native American ancestry (Swanston 2003).

5.2.15 Burial Feature 19

Burial feature 19 was uncovered accidentally during the excavation of adjacent feature 15 (38-40N/ 8-9E) in June 2001. Immediate excavation followed its discovery.

Located at grid position 38-39.5N/ 6.5E (see Figure 5.3), the tapered coffin (92cm x 24cm x 15cm, db's not recorded) was constructed of wood (sample not retained for analysis), machine-cut nails, and was oriented in a N/S direction with the head of the individual directed to the south. The individual was lying in an extended position with the hands crossed on the pelvis.

Cultural materials retrieved from the interior of the coffin included four white glass (four-hole) buttons. In addition, a small strip of fabric was discovered nailed to the exterior of the coffin lid. The fabric sample was later identified through microscopy and burn analysis as wool (plain 2/2 twill weave) and may have represented the remnants of a funeral pall or the long axis of a small fabric cross (Carlos Germann personal communication 2001).

Osteological analysis of the human skeletal remains associated with burial feature 19 was consistent with the remains of a 1.5 to 2 year old child (Swanston 2003).

5.2.16 Burial Feature 20

The use of GPR and subsequent testing of anomaly #42 led to the discovery of burial feature 20 in June 2001 at grid position 34N/ 2E (see Figure 5.3). Excavation of burial feature 20 also took place in June 2001.

The individual was interred in an extended position within a tapered coffin (108cm x 40cm x 18cm, 60-70cm dbs) constructed of unidentifiable wood (poor preservation) and both wire and machine-cut nails. Orientation of the coffin and associated human skeletal remains was clearly NE/SW with the cranium directed towards the northeast.

An “Our Lady of Lourdes” medallion represented the sole artifact recovered from the coffin (see Chapter Six). Despite the relative lack of cultural materials, the preservation of a number of fabric samples was noted. Upon excavation, the individual seemed to be covered in heavy fabric. In total, four fabric samples were collected and identified. These included woolen samples of unidentifiable weave, as well as one sample of balanced plain weave (1/1) and another of plain crochet stitch, each composed of cotton fibers.

Age-at-death assessment determined that the infant was between the ages of 2 and 2.5 years (Swanston 2003).

5.2.17 Burial Feature 21

The fragmentary remains of burial feature 21, located at grid position 30.5N/ 17.5E and oriented NE/SW, were uncovered through mechanical excavation of the site in June 2001 (see Figure 5.3). The burial feature was immediately excavated.

Due to the highly disturbed nature of the burial, the shape of the coffin was obliterated and measurements were approximated (57cm x 50cm, depth of coffin and db's not recorded). At the time of the cemetery excavation, it was unclear whether the observed disturbance occurred prior to or as a result of mechanical excavation. The coffin itself was constructed of white spruce (*Picea glauca*) and machine-cut nails. No cultural materials or fabric samples were recovered.

Despite the fragmentary nature of the remains, osteological analysis of the skeletal remains associated with burial feature 21 was consistent with the remains of a 2-month-old infant (Swanston 2003).

5.2.18 Burial Feature 22

Burial feature 22 was discovered at grid position 34N/ 18E only after mechanical excavation of the site in June 2001 (see Figure 5.3). Due to time constraints, the excavation of burial feature 22 was left until August 2001.

The coffin was simply constructed of white spruce (*Picea glauca*), machine-cut nails, and slotted screws and was oriented NE/SW. The cranial end of the coffin faced towards the northeast. The human skeletal remains within the coffin demonstrated an extended position.

The small rectangular coffin (79cm x 28cm x 15cm, db's not recorded) was elaborate in its décor, due to its adornment with numerous composite tacks. The tacks were aligned in a double row encircling the superior surface of its perimeter, with a number of tacks clustered in the shape of a cross on the coffin lid near the cranial end.

The coffin was removed as a unit from the soil and returned to the laboratory for excavation of its contents and further analysis. Remnant fabric was retrieved from under

the composite tacks employed in the decoration of the coffin, while further samples were retrieved from within the coffin itself. Subsequent microscopic and burn analysis of the fabric samples demonstrated the prevalence of black cotton (balanced plain weave [1/1]) within the coffin.

Age-at-death assessment determined that the infant was approximately 6 months of age (Swanston 2003).

5.2.19 Burial Feature 23

Burial feature 23, located at grid position 34N/ 11E, was exposed through the utilization of mechanical excavation in June 2001 (see Figure 5.3). Excavation of feature 23 followed in August of the same year.

Oriented slightly N/S to NE/SW with the cranium directed towards the northeast, the tapered coffin (ca. 195cm x ca. 40cm, depth of coffin and dbs not recorded) was constructed of white spruce (*Picea glauca*), machine-cut nails, and numerous slotted screws. The hands of the associated individual were crossed on the pelvis.

Cultural materials were nearly absent from burial feature 23, with the exception of one swatch of fabric (unidentified cellulose, unidentified weave) as well as a smooth piece of perforated wood that may have served as part of a small wooden cross.

The human skeletal remains representative of burial feature 23 were identified as those of a female between the ages of 20 and 25 years. The individual was possibly of Native American ancestry (Swanston 2003).

5.2.20 Burial Feature 24

The remnants of burial feature 24 were discovered at grid location 44N/ 14E in June 2001 through mechanical excavation of the site (see Figure 5.3). Subsequent excavation of the burial feature took place in August 2001.

Due to the highly disturbed nature of the burial, the shape of the coffin was barely discernible (tapered) and measurements were approximated (220cm x 53cm x 20-25cm, db's not recorded). Microscopic analysis of the wood demonstrated that the coffin was constructed of white spruce (*Picea glauca*); machine-cut nails and slotted screws were also used in its manufacture. Despite the disruption of the southwest portion of the coffin (cranial end), it was evident that the skeletal remains of feature 24 were oriented NE/SW and buried with the hands crossed on the pelvis.

A number of cultural materials were recovered from the burial contents of feature 24, including the remnants of an overall buckle, opaque white glass (four-hole) buttons, several sew-through metal buttons, and one unidentified ferrous artifact. Religious artifacts included a Miraculous Medallion, a medallion of Saint Michael, a medallion of Our Lady of Lourdes and a possible medallion of Saint Lucy (see Chapter Six).

In total, 5 fabric swatches were identified. These included an unidentified fabric sample of balanced plain weave (1/1) of unidentified cellulose, one swatch of wool (cable knit?), and one unwoven sample of cotton. Interestingly, two large pieces of silk (alternating float weave [uniform 2/2 by uniform 1/1] were wrapped around both feet and lower legs of the individual (see Chapter Seven for significance).

Results of the osteological analysis demonstrated that the human skeletal remains associated with burial feature 24 remains were consistent with those of a 30 to 34 year old male of possible Native American ancestry (Swanston 2003).

5.2.21 Burial Feature 26

Burial feature 26 was uncovered at grid location 34.5N/ 5E after mechanical excavation of the site in August 2001 (see Figure 5.3). Unfortunately, the burial was highly disturbed due to damage incurred through the use of a front-end loader.

Oriented NE/SW with the cranium directed to the southwest, the tapered coffin (83cm x 20cm, depth of coffin and dbs not recorded) was constructed of wood (sample not retained for analysis) and machine-cut nails. One slotted screw was recovered from the coffin. The human remains associated with feature 26 were highly disturbed with a number of the skeletal elements being retrieved from the spoil pile created by the front-end loader. Cultural materials were scant, including an unidentified brass artifact and the remnants of a small colourless glass vial. Fabric was not recovered from the burial of this individual.

Age-at-death assessment determined that the infant was approximately 2 months of age at the time of death (Swanston 2003).

5.2.22 Burial Feature 27

The use of mechanical methods of excavation in August 2001 led to the discovery of burial feature 27, located at grid position 41N/ 4E (see Figure 5.3). The individual was interred in a rectangular coffin (65cm x 26cm x 17cm [NE end]-20cm [SW end], dbs not recorded) constructed of possible white spruce (poor preservation),

wire nails and slotted screws. The coffin was oriented NE/SW with the cranium directed towards the southwest.

A mass of compacted feathers was collected from the burial contents of feature 27. However, its provenience was not recorded. The feathers may have been remnants of a small pillow used in the interment of the individual. Otherwise, cultural materials were absent from the interment. The lack of preserved fabric was recorded.

The skeletal remains associated with feature 27 represented an individual of merely 38 fetal weeks (+/- 2 weeks) (Swanston 2003).

5.2.23 Burial Feature 28

The discovery of burial feature 28, located at grid position 46N/ 7E, occurred through mechanical excavation in August 2001 (see Figure 5.3). The coffin appeared to have been damaged prior to the mechanical excavation of the cemetery. Therefore perhaps disturbance of this burial feature occurred during the initial alteration of the cemetery landscape in the summer of 1999. The disturbed coffin was oriented NE/SW with the cranium of the associated individual directed towards the southwest and the hands of the individual crossed on the pelvis.

The wood used in the manufacture of the rectangular coffin (ca. 100cm x ca. 30cm, depth of coffin and db's not recorded) was identified as white spruce (*Picea glauca*) using microscopy though a sample of nails used in its construction was not collected. At both ends of the coffin, the planks of wood used in its construction were placed perpendicular to the long axis of the structure.

Cultural materials retrieved from the interior of the coffin included a number of buttons (brass ball buttons, a shell button, opaque white glass (four-hole) buttons), and

fragments of an unidentified ferrous artifact. A sample of an unknown pink substance was also collected. Fabric samples retrieved from burial feature 28 were identified as an unknown material of semi-basket plain weave (2/1).

The skeletal materials associated with burial feature 28 were consistent with the remains of a 25 to 30 year old female of possible Native American ancestry (Swanston 2003).

5.2.24 Burial Feature 29

Burial feature 29 was exposed during mechanical excavation of the site in August 2001 at grid location 49N/ 3E (see Figure 5.3). The coffin was rectangular in shape (75cm x ca. 25cm, depth of coffin and db's not recorded), constructed with wire nails, white spruce (*Picea glauca*), and oriented NE/SW with the cranium directed towards the northeast. Due to time constraints, the coffin was removed intact, with its contents later analyzed in a laboratory setting.

Upon removal of the coffin lid, it was apparent that the individual was lying in an extended position. Three white glass (four-hole) buttons were collected from the interior of the coffin one of which possessed a radiating design on its shoulder. Fabric preservation was minimal, as only one small fabric sample was found adhering to the interior of the coffin wood identified as uneven 3/1 twill composed of cellulose fibers.

Osteological analysis of the skeletal remains associated with burial feature 29 was consistent with the remains of a one-year old child (Swanston 2003).

5.2.25 Burial Feature 30

The use of mechanical methods of excavation (August 2001) led to the discovery of burial feature 30 at grid location 45.5N/ 8.5E (see Figure 5.3). Oriented NE/SW with the cranium directed to the southwest, the small tapered coffin (81cm x 28cm x 15cm, db's not recorded) was constructed of machine-cut nails and white spruce (*Picea glauca*). Cultural materials and preserved fabric were absent, although a small sample of charcoal was retrieved from the contents of the burial.

The skeletal remains associated with feature 30 represented an individual of merely 40 fetal weeks (+/- 2 weeks) (Swanston 2003).

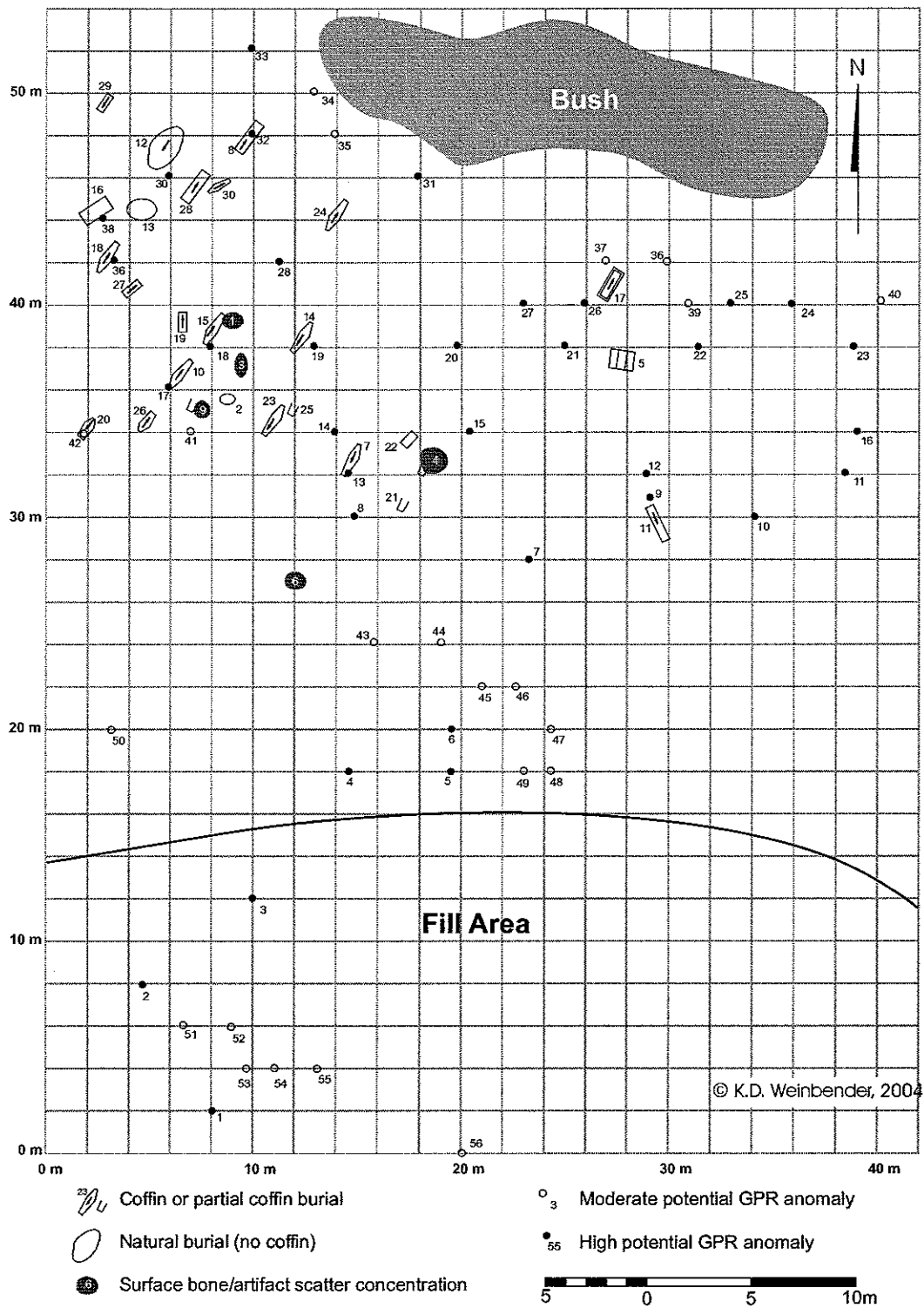


Figure 5.3 Map of the St. Vital Cemetery (Burial Features). Map courtesy of the Heritage Branch of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Saskatchewan and Kim Weinbender.

CHAPTER SIX

Description of Artifacts Recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery

6.1 Introduction

The following chapter consists of a general description of all artifacts recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery between 1999 and 2001. The artifact assemblage served to demonstrate the approximate antiquity of the St. Vital Cemetery, while the types of artifacts and their placement within the individual burial features hints towards the religion and burial practices of the burial population. In this case, those artifacts yielding sufficient information regarding the age and religious affiliation of the cemetery will be discussed in more detail.

Interpretation of the artifact assemblage recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery emphasized the presence and/or absence of materials as opposed to their relative quantity. Due to time constraints encountered throughout the excavation process, the soil from individual burial features was not screened on a regular basis. As a result, a number of small artifacts may have been overlooked. Furthermore, only a sample of construction hardware and decorative tacks was collected as the result of time constraints (see Section 6.4). Artifact quantification was further hindered by differential preservation, especially with respect to organic materials such as fabric. Quantitative data provided may not accurately reflect the true quantity of artifacts present at the St. Vital Cemetery, thereby leading to the over- and under-representation of the artifacts under examination.

6.1.1 Sprague's Classification Scheme

Artifacts recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery were classified according to the system outlined by Sprague (1981). This method involves separating artifacts into functional groups and subcategories in order to assign meaning to the archaeological materials in question. By employing this method of classification, it is crucial to consider the context of the artifacts prior to placing them into their respective functional groups. By doing so, Sprague's functional classification system allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of those individuals affiliated with the artifacts under investigation (Sprague 1981: 252). Despite its advantages, a functional classification scheme also has its drawbacks. Functional classification is based on the inherent bias of the researcher; therefore, the function assigned by the researcher may not reflect that intended by the original owner. In addition, the function of an artifact may change over time or the artifact may have been used for multiple purposes prior to being discarded.

Table 6.1 Functional Classification of the St. Vital Cemetery Artifact Assemblage

<i>Functional Group</i>	<i>Subcategory</i>
I/ Personal Items	Clothing Footwear Adornment Body Ritual and Grooming Indulgences Ritual Pocket Tools and Accessories
II/ Domestic Items	Furnishings
III/ Architecture	Construction- Materials Construction- Hardware Construction- Adornment
IV/ Precontact	Lithics
V/ Unidentified	Unidentified Metal Unidentified Organic Unidentified Miscellaneous

In the case of the St. Vital Cemetery, the burial context of the archaeological materials was considered prior to their placement into functional groups. In a burial context, however, one must consider the function of the artifact in life in addition to the function of the artifact in death. For instance, the function of various archaeological materials transcended the boundaries between life and death. In this case, their function remained unchanged despite their presence in a burial context. A suitable example in this case would be artifacts used in the manufacture of clothing such as buttons.

On the other hand, items placed in the grave by grieving family members may possess a dual functional role as grave offerings. Depending on the placement of the artifact within the contents of the grave, one is able to make inferences regarding the function of the archaeological materials (Bell 1994: 28). Archaeological materials recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery thought to serve as grave offerings will be addressed on an individual basis as they are encountered throughout the text. A general discussion of grave offerings can be found in Chapter Seven.

Overall, Sprague's classification scheme was suitable for artifacts retrieved from the St. Vital Cemetery, however, an additional functional category was added to account for precontact materials. In addition, the subcategory of Construction-Adornment was also added to the Architecture category to account for ornamental tacks used for decorative purposes. Table 6.1 fully outlines the various functional groups and subcategories utilized for the classification of the St. Vital artifact assemblage.

Table 6.2 Presence/ Absence Data for the St. Vital Cemetery Artifact Assemblage

<i>Burial Feature</i>	<i>Personal Items</i>	<i>Domestic Items</i>	<i>Architecture</i>	<i>Precontact</i>	<i>Unidentified</i>
2			+		
4			+		
5			+		+
7	+		+		
8	+		+		
10	+		+		
11	+		+		+
12	+			+	+
13					
14	+	+	+		
15	+		+		+
16					
17	+		+		+
18	+		+		
19	+		+		
20	+		+		
21			+		
22	+		+		
23	+		+		
24	+		+		+
26	+		+		+
27		+	+		
28	+		+		+
29	+		+		
30			+		+
Surface Scatter	+		+		+

6.2 Personal Items

6.2.1 Clothing

The Clothing subcategory consisted of numerous buttons, belts, and buckles of various types. A numerical total of those items included in the Clothing subcategory was not calculated due to the problematic nature of the fabric samples. The results of the fabric analysis are discussed in a separate section of this chapter, as it was difficult to determine whether remnant fabric was representative of clothing or material used to line the interior of the coffins (Section 6.7).

By far, the most common artifacts in the Clothing subcategory were buttons. Buttons of various styles (2-hole, 4-hole, snap-closure, ball) and material types (glass,

shell, metal, wood) were recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery. Monochrome four-hole glass buttons were predominantly white in color with a recessed center and lacking in design (n=40). These buttons ranged in size from 10.50mm to 14.19mm in diameter (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 White Four-Hole Glass Buttons from the St. Vital Cemetery (n=40)

Burial Feature	Count	Colour/ Design	Diameter (mm)	Thickness (mm)
8	7	Opaque	10.50-11.49	2.83-3.17
	1	Translucent	11.11	3.37
	1	Radiating Lines on Shoulder	12.71	3.55
10	1	Opaque	11.47	3.34
	1	Fuchsia Shoulder	11.37	4.34
11	1	Fuchsia Shoulder	10.75	2.88
12	3	Opaque	11.07-11.33	3.11-3.33
15	1	Raised Circular Design on Shoulder	11.26	3.13
	4	Royal Blue Shoulder	10.84-11.27	2.90-3.09
17	3	Opaque	10.57-13.90	3.64-3.81
19	2	Opaque	11.22-11.37	3.09-3.60
	2	Translucent	10.99-11.00	3.25-3.29
24	5	Opaque	11.04-11.44	3.14-3.32
28	2	Opaque	10.71-11.44	2.61-3.37
29	1	Radiating Lines on Shoulder	14.19	3.90
	2	Translucent	10.73-11.05	2.80-2.81
	2	Opaque	11.32-11.42	2.86-3.53
Surface Scatter	1	Beige Radiating Lines and Triangles	10.68	3.22
Total				40

A small number of buttons possessed colored shoulders of fuchsia and royal blue (Figure 6.1). A single button recovered from the surface scatter displayed a design of beige alternating triangles and radiating lines across the entirety of the button's face (n=1). Monochrome designs were present only on the shoulder of some buttons, which included radiating lines and raised circular designs.

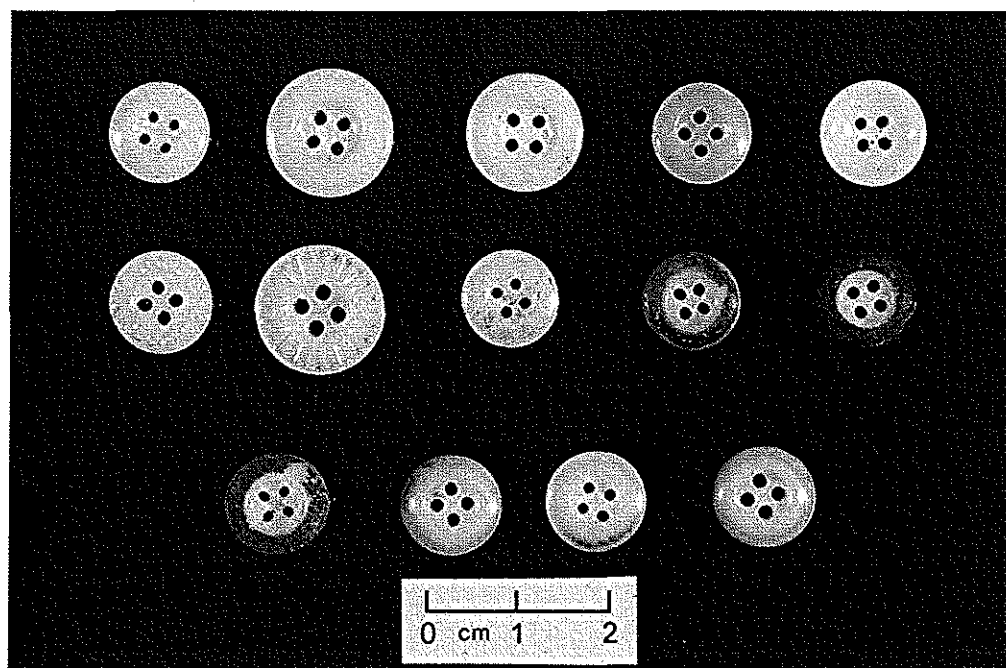


Figure 6.1 Assorted glass buttons.

Shell buttons were rarely encountered ($n=5$), of which three possessed four holes while the remainder possessed two holes ($n=2$). These buttons were often manufactured from mollusk shells (Doll et al 1988: 108).

Table 6.4 Shell Buttons Recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery ($n=5$)

Burial Feature	Count	Number of Holes	Diameter	Thickness
11	2	4	9.24mm-9.72mm	2.53mm-2.91mm
	1	2	10.43mm	1.64mm
17	1	4	8.32mm	1.33mm
28	1	2	Corroded	Corroded
Total				5

In general, glass and shell buttons recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery likely served as fasteners for various items of clothing including shirts, dresses, and undergarments (Figure 6.2). According to Klimko (1983: 189, 192), these buttons hold little or no diagnostic value due to the frequency of their use in 18th- and 19th-century clothing.

Fragments of at least two buttons fabricated of wood were recovered from the contents of burial feature 11. These buttons ranged in size from approximately 17.38mm to 17.96mm in diameter (Figure 6.2).

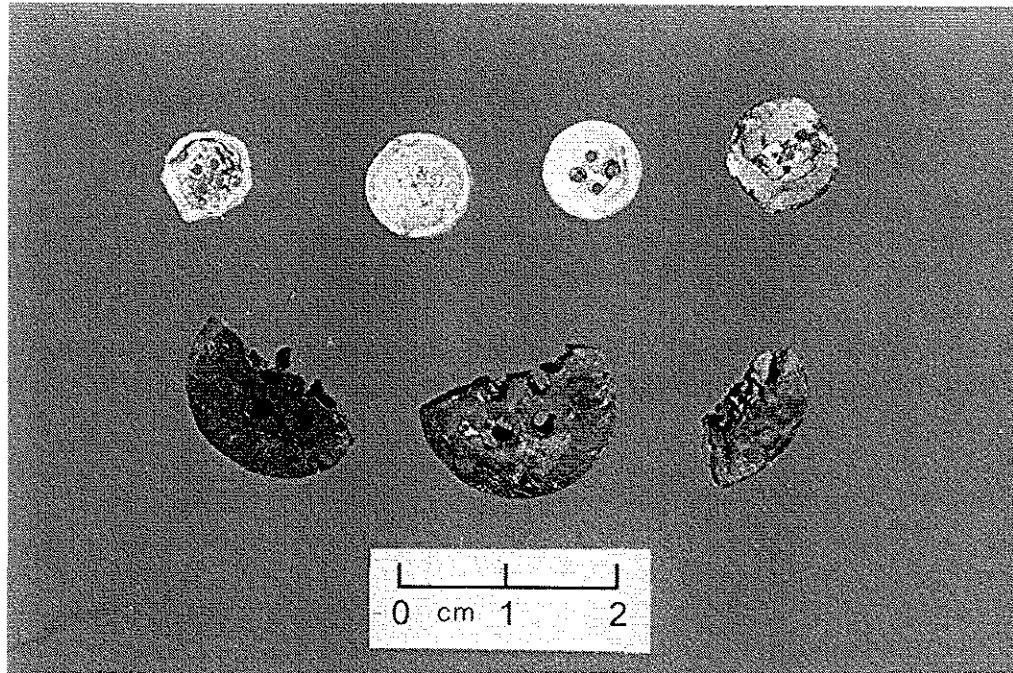


Figure 6.2 Shell and wood buttons.

Metal buttons retrieved from the St. Vital Cemetery (n=57) varied in style (Table 6.5). Perhaps the most interesting of the metal buttons were those of copper alloy possessing the emblem of the North West Mounted Police (n=5). These buttons were manufactured in three pieces, which included a convex face, a flattened backing, and a wire shank. Two styles of NWMP buttons were recovered from the surface scatter at the St. Vital Cemetery. The predominant style of NWMP button (n=4) possessed the Victoria Crown in the center with “NWMP” on the top and “CANADA” along the bottom (Figure 6.3a). These buttons ranged in size from 19.44mm to 19.71mm in diameter. Due to the effects of corrosion, maker’s marks were only visible on a single button. Along the outer margin of the backing, the marking read “Smith and Wright”.

Similar NWMP buttons with identical maker's marks were recovered from the barracks at Fort Walsh in southwestern Saskatchewan (Moat 1978: 41). This style of button was worn on the tunics of the NWMP after 1876 (Taylor and Frye 1985).

Table 6.5 Metal Buttons Recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery (n=57)

Burial Feature	Style	Material Type	Count	Diameter (mm)
10	Ball	Brass	20	8.45-8.84
11	Ball	Brass	1	9.45
	Sew-through (radiating design)	Brass	1	20.06
	Snap Closure	Brass and Ferrous	9	13.81
15	Sew-through (four-hole)	Unidentified metal	1	16.01
17	Snap Closure	Brass and Ferrous	11	13.19-19.10
24	Sew-through (four-hole)	Unidentified metal	3	Corroded
	Sew-through	Unidentified metal	1	17.07
28	Ball	Brass	2	12.17
Surface Scatter	Ball	Brass	2	8.79-8.99
	NWMP (1874)	Brass	1	17.85
	NWMP (1876)	Brass	4	19.44-19.71
	Shank	Brass with ferrous shank	1	15.18
Total				57

A single NWMP button recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery displayed a vastly different design (n=1). In the center of the button was the Regal Crown. Above the crown was the word "CANADA" written on a scroll in relief. At the base of the button was the word "MILITIA", also written on a scroll in relief (Figure 6.3b). Surrounding the margin of the design was a vine bearing twelve leaves. Maker's marks were not visible in this case. This specific style of NWMP button was used on the scarlet tunic in 1874 for the initial March West (Taylor and Frye 1985). It is unknown whether the NWMP buttons recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery were related to its use, acquired through trade, or if they were simply lost by members of the force in its vicinity.

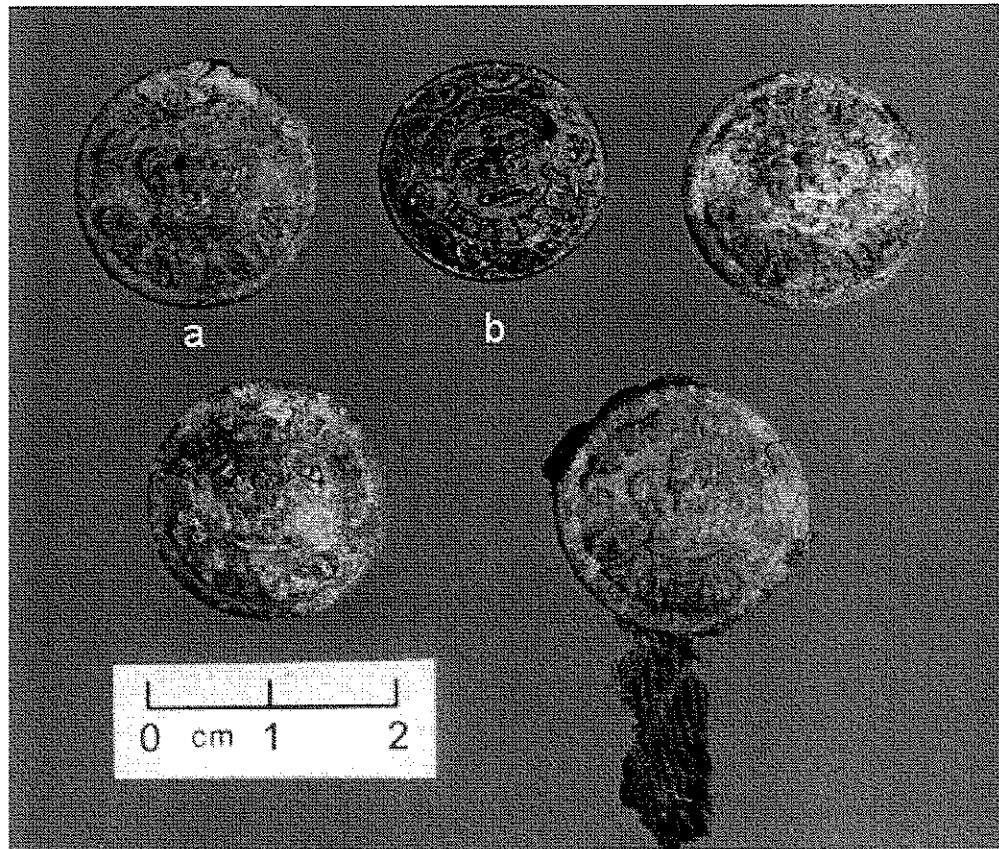


Figure 6.3 NWMP buttons from the surface scatter.

Another style of metal button recovered from the site was the brass ball button (n=25), the majority of which were recovered from the contents of burial feature 10 (n=20). The remainder was recovered from the surface scatter and from burial features 11 and 28 (Table 6.5). The diameter of the ball buttons ranged from 8.45mm to 12.17mm. Buttons of this style were hollow and manufactured in three parts (ball, backing, and loop). Ball buttons were fastened to garments through a small loop of brass wire (Figure 6.4a).

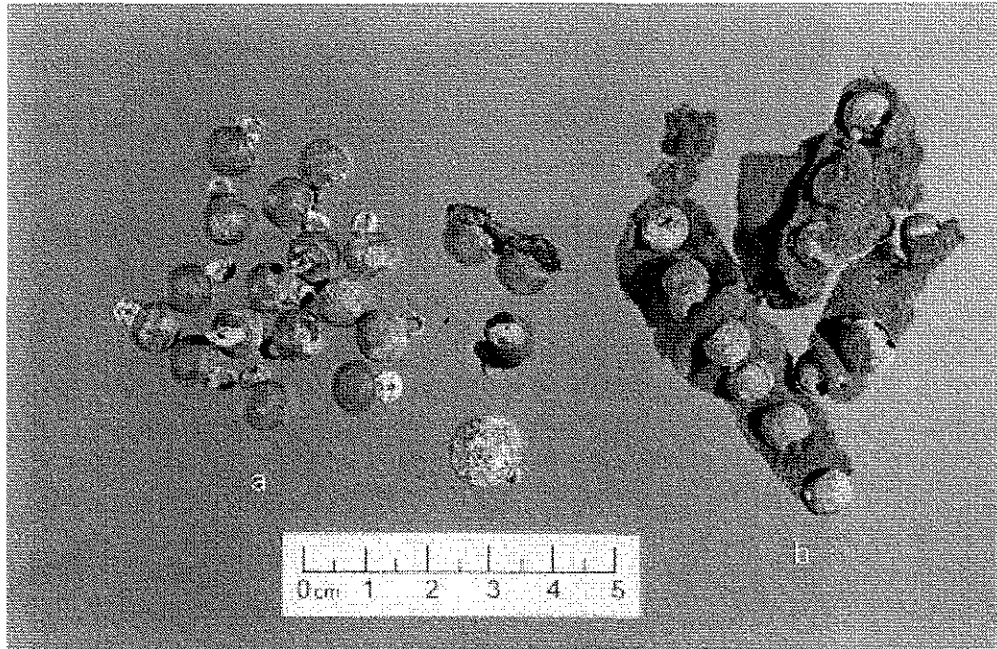


Figure 6.4 Brass ball buttons and brass beads on brown felt.

A number of composite snap-closure buttons were collected from the contents of burial features 11 (n=9) and 17 (n=11). This style of button makes use of a shank, which is punctured through the fabric into the perforation of a washer that is secured on the opposite side (Figure 6.5d). As a result, snap-closure buttons are permanently fixed to the garment (Moat 1978: 41). Snap-closure buttons recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery were found in association with heavy woolen fabric and were therefore likely used for the fastening of outerwear. Only a single snap-closure button recovered from the contents of burial feature 17 was suitable for the purpose of measurement (diameter=20.48mm).

Other metal buttons recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery were more simplistic in design. A single sew-through brass button possessed a design of radiating lines on its shoulder (Figure 6.5c), while others were plain in design (Figure 6.5a). A composite button recovered from the surface scatter was convex in shape and would have attached

to fabric through a small circular loop of brass wire (Figure 6.5b). Other metal and composite buttons were so badly corroded that identification of the button style was impossible to determine (Table 6.5).

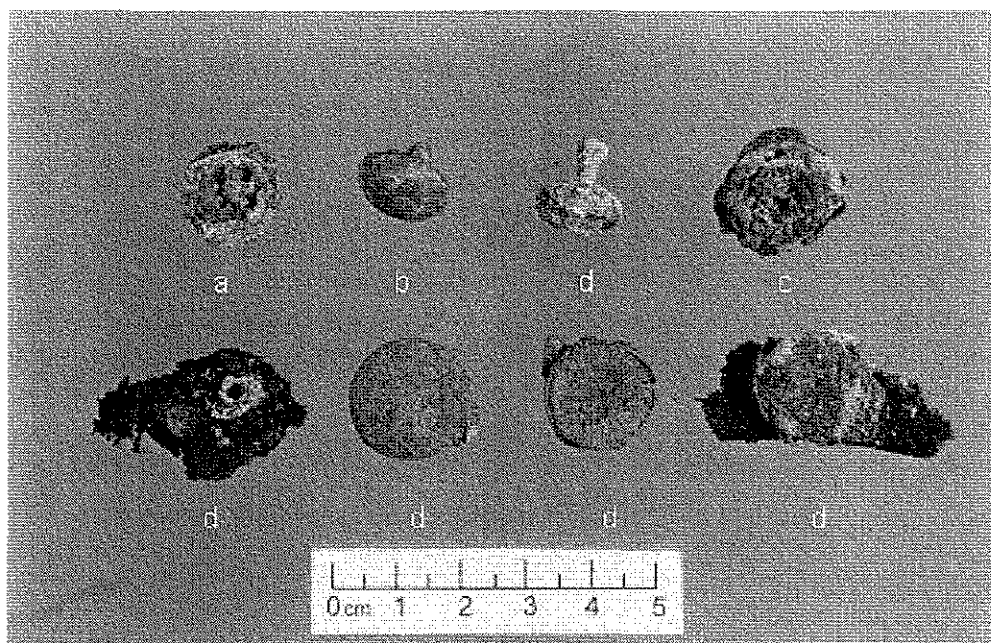


Figure 6.5 Assortment of metal buttons.

Leather belts (n=3) and their associated buckles (n=2) were recovered from the contents of burial features 8, 10, and 14. In both instances, advanced deposition of corrosion products on the belt buckles somewhat hindered identification of the precise buckle style. The ferrous belt buckle recovered from burial feature 14 was rectangular in shape. The buckle measured 27.70mm in length and 21.53mm in width. The associated belt was 19.34mm in width. It was not possible to determine the total length of the belt, as it was preserved in a circular shape. The belt was punctured along its length by evenly spaced single holes, although it appeared that two extra holes were added in order to lessen the size of the belt (Figure 6.6).

The length of the belt associated with burial feature 8 was not determined as the belt was fragmented into five separate pieces. Four fragments were punctured along their length by evenly spaced single holes. The maximum width of the belt was approximately 12.59mm. The ferrous belt buckle associated with burial feature 8 was also rectangular in shape, however, severe corrosion interfered with measurement of its dimensions. Two fragments of leather collected from the contents of burial feature 10 represented the remnants of a belt. The average width of the belt in this case was 9.24mm.

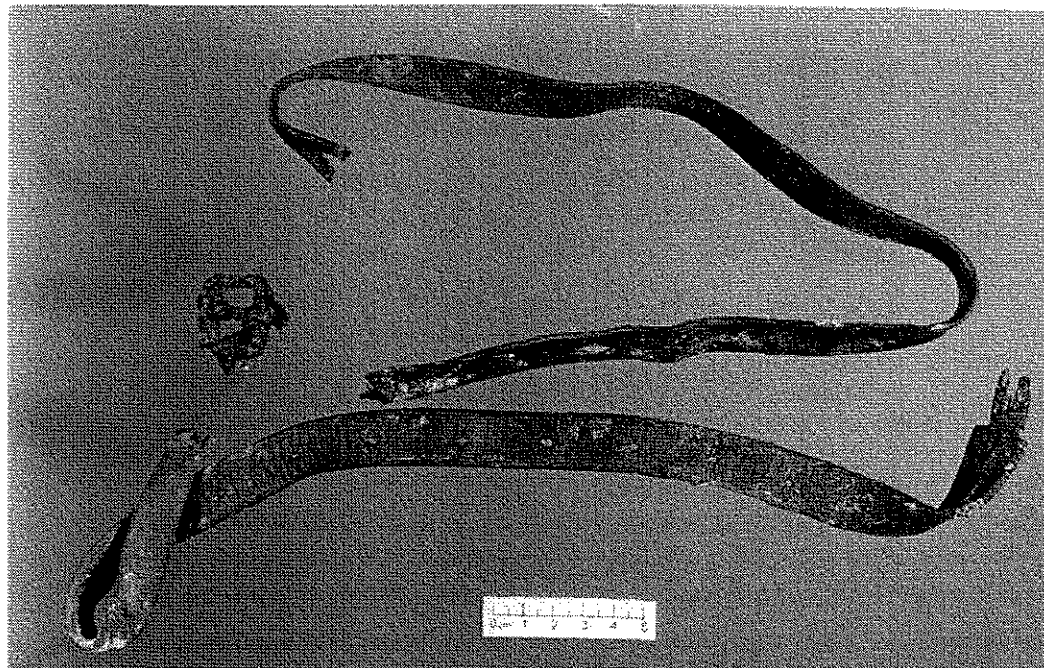


Figure 6.6 Leather belt recovered from burial feature 14.

Also included in the Clothing subcategory was a cap recovered from the contents of burial feature 12 (Figure 6.7). The cap possessed a black leather brim and was attached to black fabric. The associated fabric was identified as lightweight cotton (balanced plain weave [1/1]) through microscopy and burn testing. At the time of his

interment, the individual associated with burial feature 12 was likely wearing the cap, even though the cap was discovered lying on the right arm.



Figure 6.7 Black fabric cap (*in situ*) associated with burial feature 12. Photograph courtesy of the Heritage Resource Branch of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Saskatchewan.

The final artifact type included in the Clothing subcategory was ferrous overall buckles (n=3). A single overall buckle was retrieved from burial features 15, 17, and 24. Only the buckle recovered from burial feature 17 was still intact. In this case, the buckle measured 33.57mm in length and 25.67mm in width. Those recovered from burial features 17 and 24 were fragmented and highly corroded (Figure 6.8).

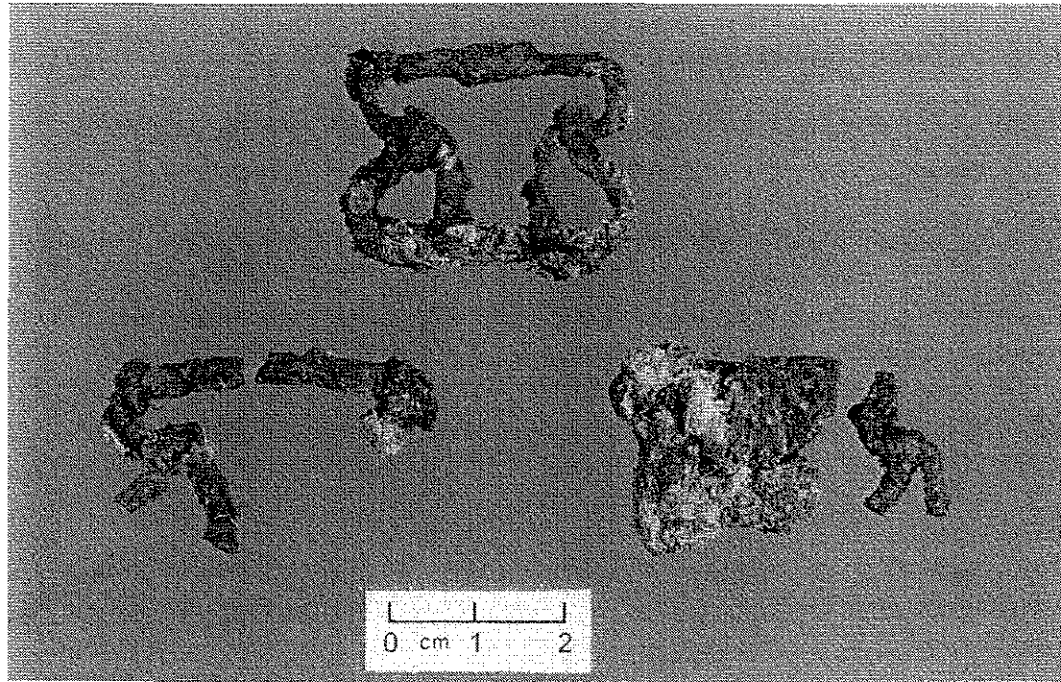


Figure 6.8 Ferrous overall buckles.

6.2.2 Footwear

The Footwear subcategory consisted of a pair of leather moccasins, which were recovered from the contents of burial feature 11 (n=2). The moccasins were poorly preserved with only the remnants of the soles remaining. A host of seed beads present near the feet of the individual suggested that the moccasins were in fact decorated. Stitch marks were still visible along the margins of the leather. However, further analysis (measurements) was hindered by the obscure shape in which the moccasins were preserved.

6.2.3 Adornment

The adornment subcategory consisted of a shell pendant, brass wire coils, and various styles and material types of beads. Due to the small size of these artifacts, numerical data tabulated in this section may not be representative of the true number of beads present at the St. Vital Cemetery.

Beads were initially sorted according to material type. The majority of brass beads collected from the site were identical in shape, with the exception of a single tubular brass bead recovered from burial feature 11 (Figure 6.9a). The tubular bead measured 10.50mm in length and 5.75mm in diameter (Table 6.6). A small fragment of brass wire was adhered to one of its ends. The remainder of the brass beads displayed hollow centers and were round in shape (n=66). Many of the round brass beads were adhered to each other in pairs due to the effects of corrosion (Figure 6.9c). Brass beads ranged from 6.60mm to 8.80mm in diameter and from 5.21mm to 6.65mm in height.

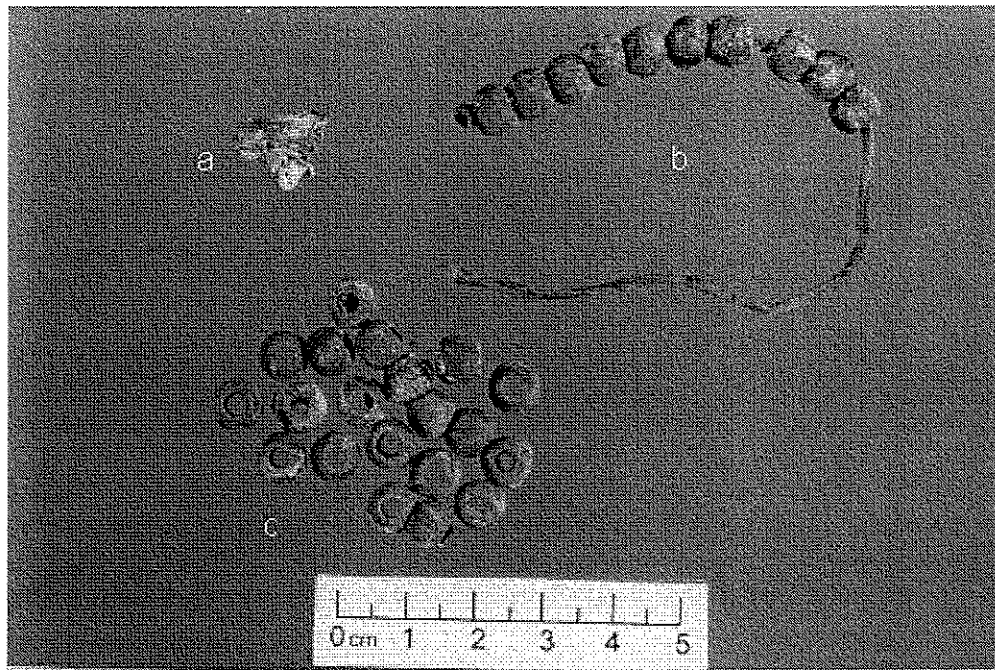


Figure 6.9 Tubular and round brass beads. Note brass beads on leather cord.

A number of round brass beads were strung on a brown leather cord (n=15), suggesting that these beads in particular perhaps functioned as part of a necklace (Figure 6.9b). Of these, the majority was collected from the surface scatter (n=11), although a small fragment of brown leather cord and brass beads (n=4) were recovered from the contents of burial feature 10.

Table 6.6 Brass Beads Recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery (n=67)

Burial Feature	Shape	Count	Diameter (mm)	Height (mm)
10	Round	4	6.76-6.97	5.77-6.17
11	Tubular	1	5.75	10.50
Surface Scatter	Round	62	6.60-7.93	5.21-8.80
Total				67

A number of brass beads recovered from the surface scatter were intentionally attached to brown felt through the use of a brown leather cord (n=18). These beads in particular may have served as decorative items on clothing (Figure 6.4b).

Glass beads far outnumbered any other type of artifact recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery (n= ca.18,101). Beads were sorted according to method of manufacture, size, colour, and diaphaneity according to the classification system outlined by Kidd and Kidd (1970). Glass beads were first sorted based on their method of manufacture, which included drawn or wire wound methods in this case. Beads were then sorted according to their general size into one of five categories, including Very Small (<2mm), Small (2-4mm), Medium (4-6mm), Large (6-10mm), and Very Large (>10mm). Bead colour was identified using the colour charts included in the Kidd and Kidd (1970) publication. Depending on the ability of the glass beads to transmit light (otherwise known as diaphaneity), they were classified as opaque, translucent, or clear (Kidd and Kidd 1970).

Table 6.7 Glass Beads Represented at the St. Vital Cemetery (n= ca.18,101)

Bead Colour	Diaphaneity	Bead Type	Burial Feature			Totals
			<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>Surface Scatter</i>	
Brite Blue	Translucent	Ila	69	1	-	70
Dark Shadow Blue	Translucent	Ila	ca. 7,280	-	1	ca. 7,281
Aqua Blue	Opaque	Ila	-	-	36	36
Brite Navy	Opaque	Ila	-	-	3	3
Light Aqua Blue	Opaque	Ila	-	-	7	7
Bright	Opaque	WIb	-	-	1	1
Copan Blue	Opaque	WIb	8	-	22	30
Apple Green	Opaque	Ila	-	35	14	49
Emerald Green	Clear	Ila	-	39	6	45
Light Yellow	Opaque	Ila	15	-	6	21
Light Cherry	Clear	Ila	-	11	2	14
Rose	Opaque	Ila	-	19	3	22
Light Pink	Opaque	Ila	-	11	3	14
Rose Wine	Clear	Ila	-	3	-	3
Light Grey	Clear	WIb	-	-	5	5
White	Opaque	Ila	ca. 10,420	11	1	ca. 10,432
White Core with Scarlet Outer Layer	Opaque/Translucent	IVa	-	64	4	68
Total						ca. 18,101

Drawn beads (Type Ila) were the most popular bead type (and artifact type) present at the St. Vital Cemetery (n=18,005). All Type Ila beads were monochrome in colour, measured less than 4mm in diameter, and were round in shape (Figure 6.10).

Polychrome drawn beads (n=68) were of a single type (Type IVa), whereby each possessed a translucent red outer layer and an opaque white center. This style of layered bead was commonly referred to as Cornaline D'Aleppo beads (Sprague 1985: 94). Cornaline D'Aleppo beads recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery measured less than 2mm in diameter and were round in shape.

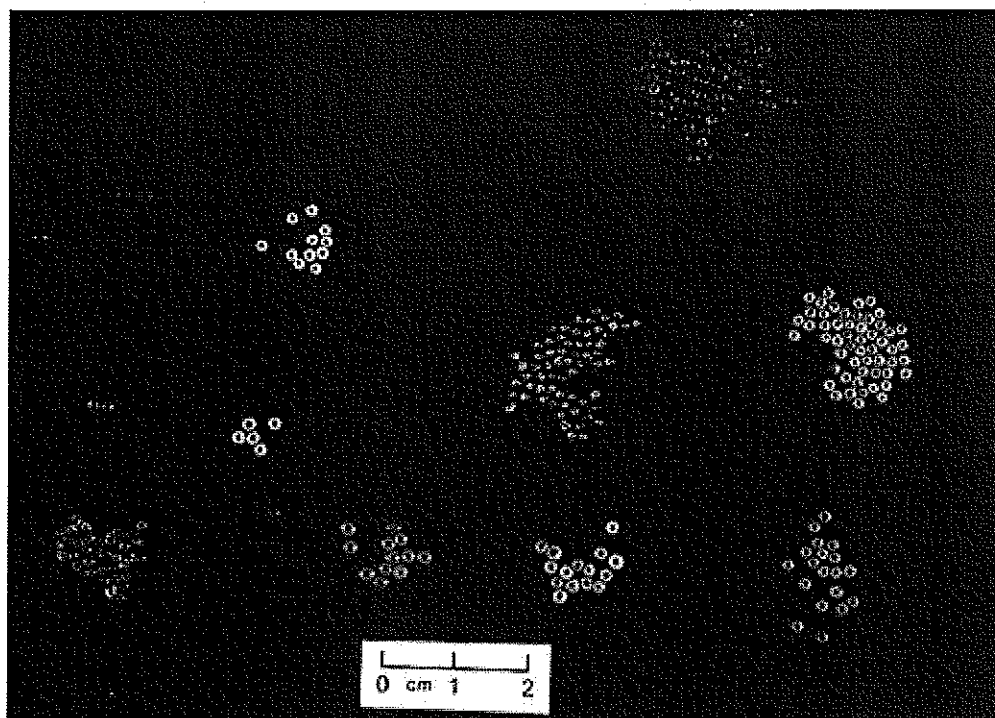


Figure 6.10 Assortment of Type IIa glass beads.

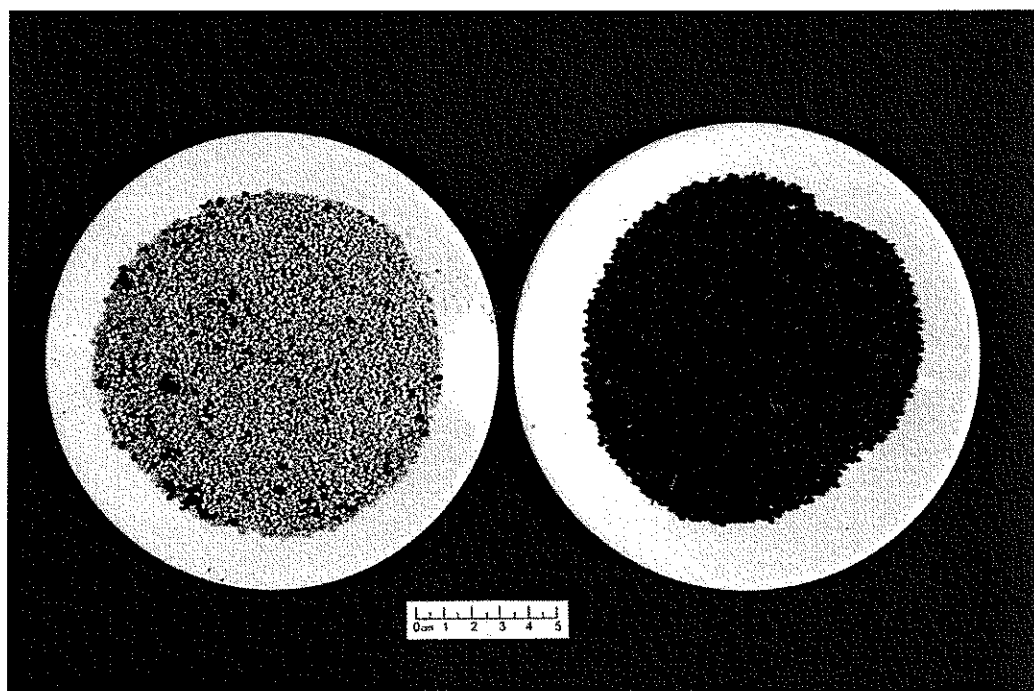


Figure 6.11 Mass of Type IIa glass beads recovered from burial feature 10.

In general, drawn beads less than 4mm in diameter were often called seed beads due to their small size. First Nations and Métis populations frequently used seed beads after European contact for the embroidery of clothing (Koch 1977).

The largest mass of type IIa beads was recovered from the contents of burial feature 10 along the lower legs of the associated individual (Figure 6.11). In this particular burial feature alone, approximately 17,784 type IIa beads were represented (Table 6.7).

Wire wound beads (n=28) were represented by a single variety (Type WIb). All Type WIb beads collected from the Saint Vital Cemetery were round in shape and ranged in size from 6mm to over 10mm in diameter (Table 6.7). Variation in the colour of wire wound beads was minimal (Figure 6.12). Beads of this shape and size generally functioned as ornamentation as opposed to the decoration of garments.

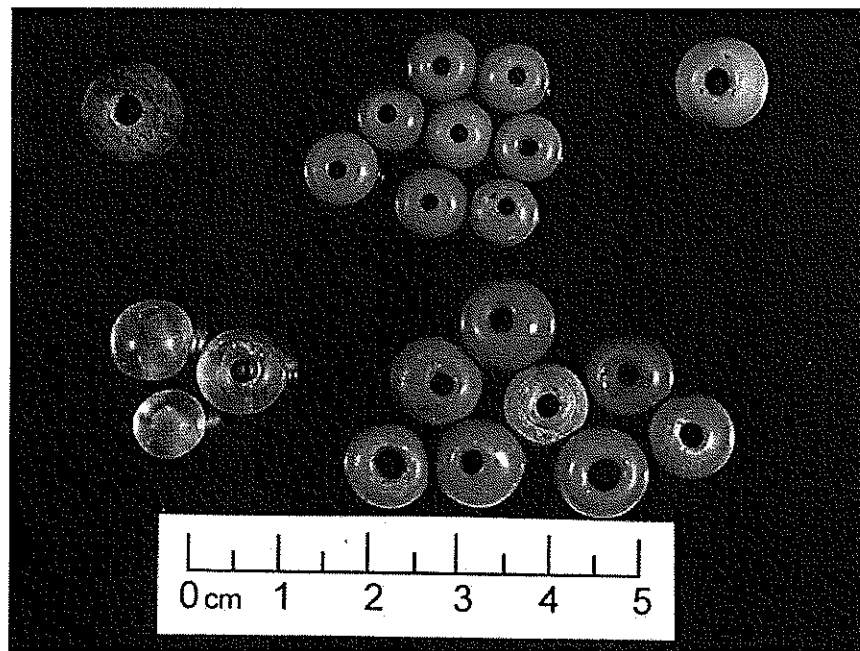


Figure 6.12 Assortment of Type WIb glass beads.

At the St. Vital Cemetery in general, the most popular colours of glass beads, regardless of bead type, were white and dark shadow blue (Table 6.7). According to documentary sources, dark blue and white seed beads were preferentially used for the adornment of clothing by various First Nations groups on the Plains (Davis 1973: 8).

Also included in the Adornment subcategory were brass coils. A number of fragments of severely corroded coils made of brass wire were collected from the contents of burial feature 11 (n=12), the majority of which were recovered from the mid-thoracic area of the associated individual. Remnant white string was recovered from inside the coils suggesting that they served a decorative function. Whether the brass coils were hung from the individual's clothing or hair or served as part of a necklace is unknown. According to documentary sources, small metal ornaments, such as brass coils, were often used to decorate the hair and clothing of First Nations people (Koch 1977: 91).

Similar brass coils were recovered from the contents of burial feature 14. However, the context of their discovery warrants special consideration. In this case, two separate strands of brass beads and brass coils were strung on a long lock of brown hair and secured at one end with a knot of brown leather cord (Figure 6.13). One strand possessed 16 brass beads (similar to those described above) and a brass coil measuring 5.71mm in length. The total length of the strand was 139.09mm. The other strand possessed 18 brass beads and a single brass coil measuring 5.61mm in length. The total length of this particular strand was 149.12mm. The two strands of beads and coils were likely once worn in the hair for decorative purposes. However, their placement alongside various other artifacts above the head of the individual suggests that these items may also have functioned as grave offerings (see Chapter Seven).

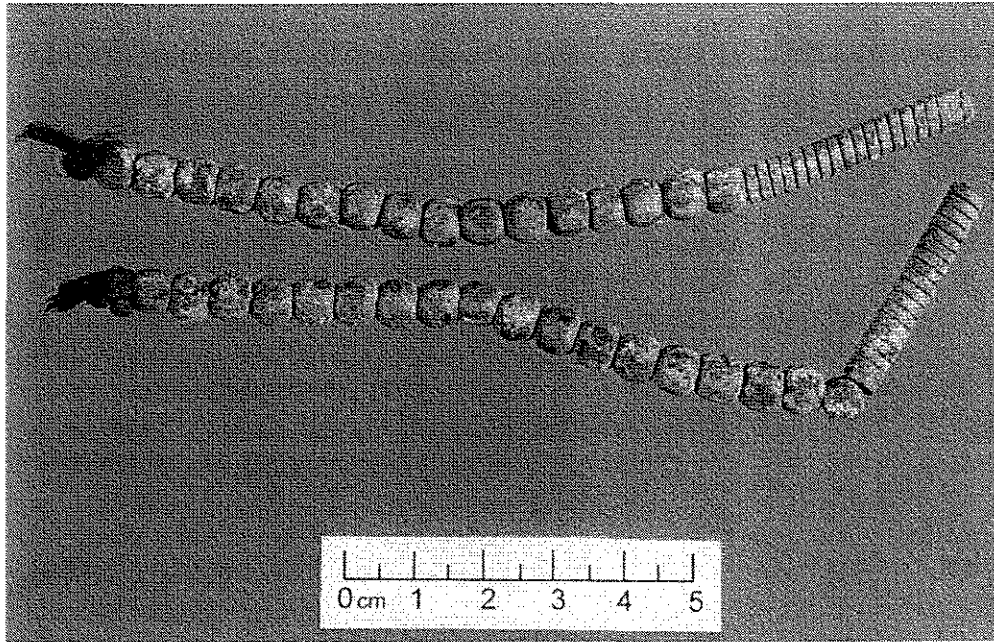


Figure 6.13 Brass beads and coils recovered from burial feature 14.

The Adornment subcategory also included a shell pendant that was discovered in the contents of burial feature 10 (n=1). The shell was oval in shape, perforated at one end, and would have hung from the neck of the individual in a longitudinal orientation. The approximate length and width of the shell was 31.08mm and 18.55mm respectively. It was not possible to measure the thickness of the shell due to its fragility and decomposition of the shell in a laminar fashion. Identification of the shell type was not possible, as diagnostic features used for the identification of shells were not present.

6.2.4 Body Ritual and Grooming

The Body Ritual and Grooming Subcategory (n=2) consisted of a pocket mirror and a black vulcanized rubber comb. The pocket mirror was recovered from the contents of burial feature 12 (n=1). The backing of the mirror possessed a repetitive floral and leaf pattern (in relief) around the perimeter with the phrase “E.P. A PARIS” (Figure 6.14).

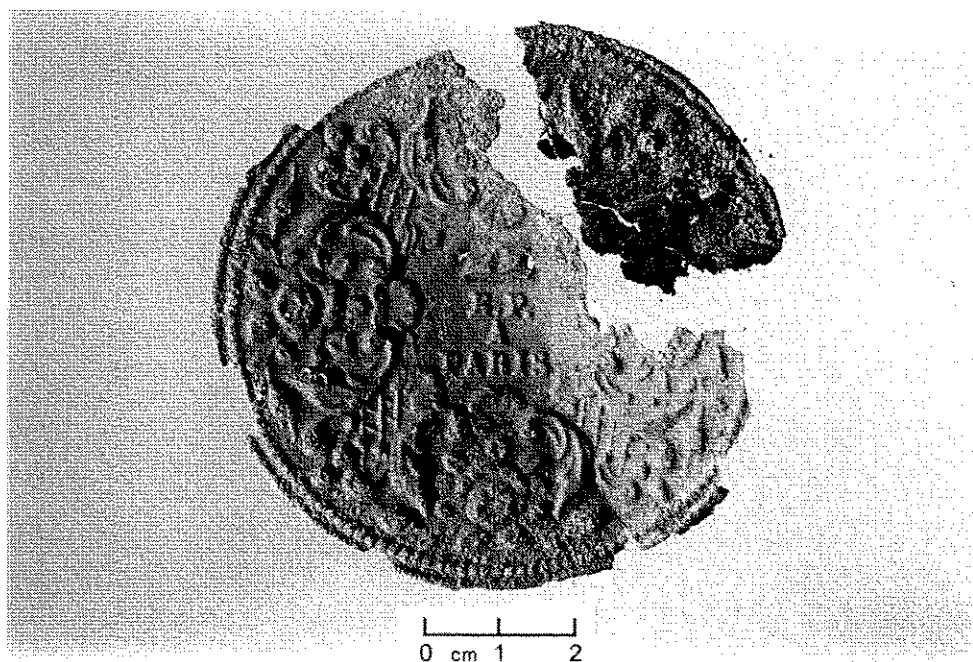


Figure 6.14 Pocket mirror recovered from burial feature 12.

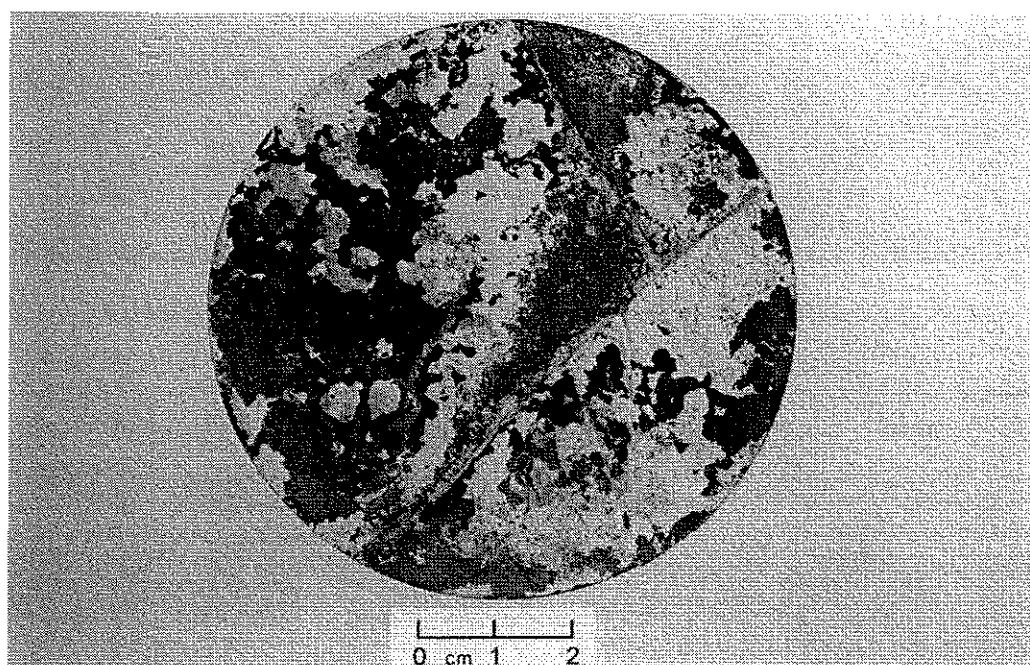


Figure 6.15 Window glass associated with the pocket mirror from burial feature 12.

The precise meaning of the phrase is unknown. However, it may simply be an indication of its place of manufacture. Measurements of the mirror backing were not taken, as the metal was too friable to flatten for this purpose. The glass contained within

the mirror possessed a reflective surface and was initially broken into five separate pieces prior to its reconstruction (Figure 6.15). The glass measured 76.58mm in diameter and was 1.61mm thick. The mirror was likely within the pocket of the associated individual at the time of his death (see Chapter Seven).

A black vulcanized rubber comb was recovered from the contents of burial feature 11 (n=1). Vulcanized rubber was formed through the combination of sulfur and hard rubber and was used for the manufacture of various items towards the end of the 19th-century (Doll et al 1988: 152).

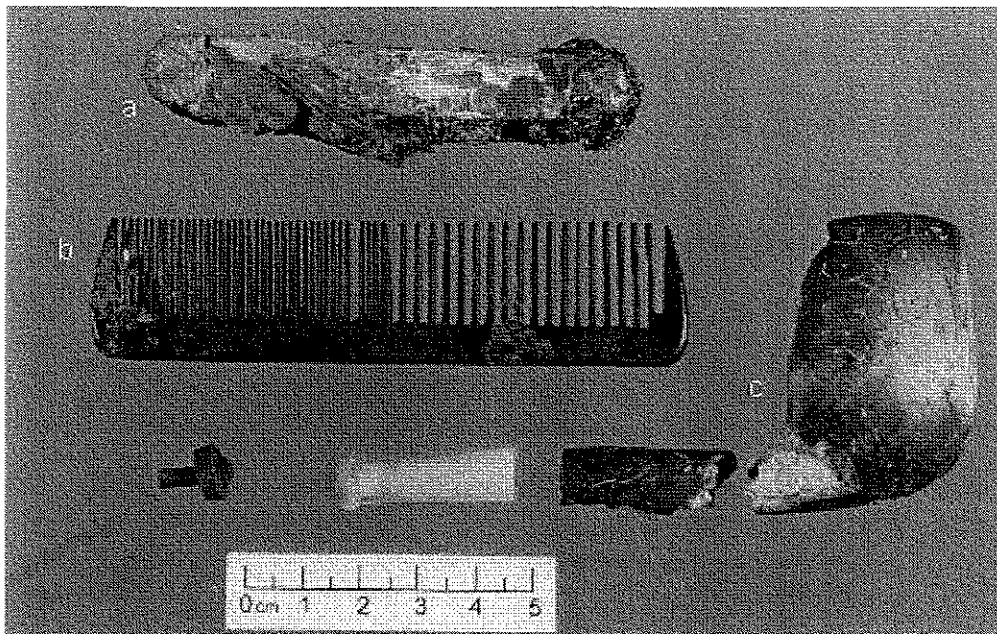


Figure 6.16 Variety of artifacts recovered from within the remains of a pocket from burial feature 11.

The comb was discovered alongside various other artifacts that appeared to be held within the pocket of the associated individual at the time of his death. It measured 103.17mm in length and 3.64mm from the back of the comb to the tips of the teeth. Two different sizes of teeth were noted, each of which was segregated on opposite sides of

the comb (Figure 6.16b). The style of comb suggests that it functioned as a pocket comb made for everyday use, as opposed to a fine-toothed louse comb.

6.2.5 Indulgences

The Indulgence category (n=44) consisted of clay pipes, wooden matches, and tobacco. Tobacco (n=2) was recovered from the contents of burial features 12 and 14. The tobacco found within the coffin of burial feature 14 was recovered alongside other artifacts, which were placed in a bundle above the head of the individual. In this case, the tobacco may have functioned as a grave offering. Also within the contents of the aforementioned bundle was a number of wooden matches (n=24). Additional wooden matches (n=12) were recovered from burial feature 11 along with various other artifacts that appeared to be held within the pocket of the individual upon interment. The remainder of the matches were recovered from the contents of burial feature 10 (n=2). Overall, matches recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery ranged between 54.47mm to 57.75mm in length.

Table 6.8 Pipes Recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery (n=4)

Burial Feature	Colour	Count	Bowl Height	Bore Diameter (mm)	Stem Length (mm)	Outer Bowl Diameter (mm)	Inner Bowl Diameter (mm)
11	Brown	1	ca. 47	-	-	ca. 28	Ca. 20
14	Reddish-Brown	1	31.80	6.69	ca. 20	19.77	15.49
Surface	Buff/Grey	1	31.78	6.29	ca. 20	20.24	15.48
Scatter	Grey	1	32.70	5.77	ca. 19	20.13	16.18
Total							4

A crudely-made clay pipe (n=1) was recovered from the contents of burial feature 11 in what appeared to be a pocket. An opalized glass mouthpiece was found with the fragmented pipe bowl and stem, as well as a small unidentified piece of wood thought to be part of the pipe's manufacture (Figure 6.16c). The underside of the pipe

appeared to have been burned. The only similarity between the pipe in question and others recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery was the general stub-stemmed shape (Table 6.8). Maker's marks and mould seams were not visible. Archaeological examples of similar pipes were not encountered throughout the course of this research. Therefore the precise origins of this pipe remain unknown.

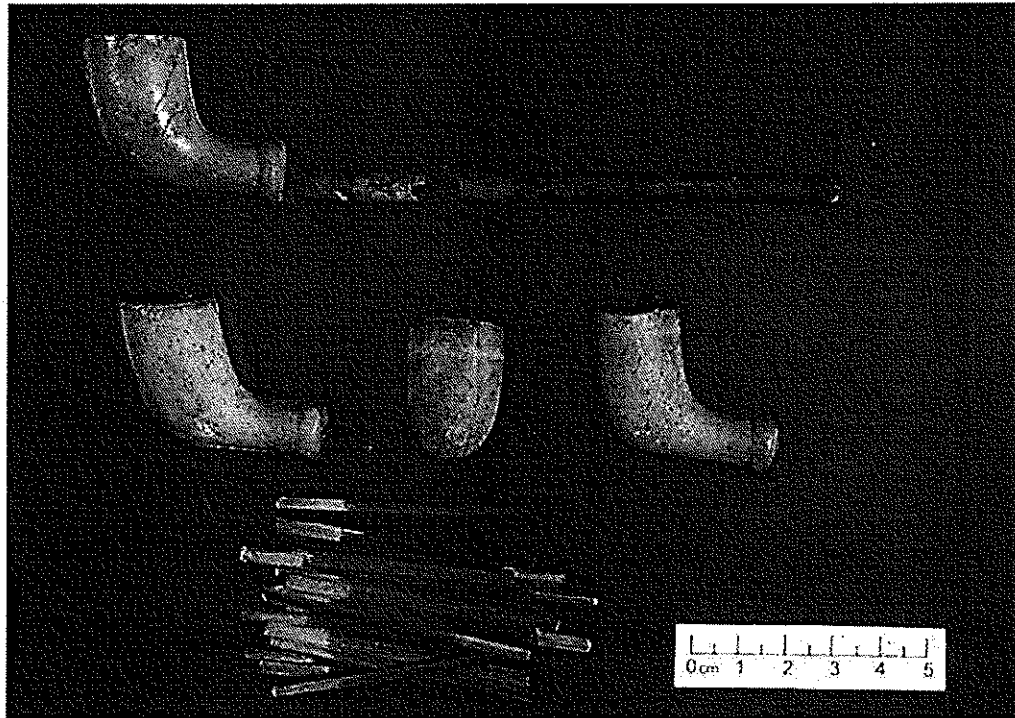


Figure 6.17 Stub-stemmed pipes and wooden matches. Wooden matches pictured are from burial feature 14.

The remaining stub-stemmed pipes ($n=3$) recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery were identical in shape and manufacture, although their color ranged from reddish-brown to buff/grey (Table 6.8). All pipes appear to be similar in size and unglazed. Makers marks were absent in all three cases. However, longitudinal axis mould joints were visible. Only the pipe recovered from feature 14 possessed the remnants of a reed stem (Figure 6.17). This pipe in particular was recovered in association with other artifacts, which were placed in a bundle above the head of the individual associated with

burial feature 14 (see Chapter Seven for significance). The two other stub-stemmed pipes were discovered in the surface scatter, one of which was broken into two fragments (Figure 6.17).

Similar stub-stemmed pipes have been recovered from 19th-century archaeological sites in Western Canada, including the HBC post of Fort Pelly (Klimko 1983), a *Hivernant* Métis site in Saskatchewan's Cypress Hills (Elliot 1971), and at a Whiskey-Trading Post located in High River, Alberta (Kennedy 1986). The pipe fragments recovered from these locations, including the aforementioned pipes recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery, seemed to conform to the style of American-made stub-stemmed pipes. It seems the stub-stemmed style of pipe originated in Central Europe and was brought to North America in the early to mid-18th century by immigrants, after which stub-stemmed pipes were predominantly manufactured in the Northeastern United States (Walker 1974: 113). These pipes were made from local sources of clay and were formed using bipartite moulds of metal, hence the remnant longitudinal mould joints visible on many pipes manufactured in this manner. Once the pipes were formed they were fired and fitted with a reed stem (Walker 1974: 105-106). The primary centers of stub-stemmed pipe production in the 19th-century were located in Pamplin (Virginia), Bethabara (North Carolina), Akron (Ohio) and Point Pleasant (Ohio). According to Walker (1974: 116), "all four centers appear to have established a widespread trade with their products, but only the Pamplin and the two Ohio industries appear to have traded into the American West".

The stub-stemmed pipes recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery did not possess maker's marks. Therefore, the precise location of their manufacture within the Northeastern United States remains undetermined. Residents of 19th-century Battleford

likely gained access to American-made stub-stemmed pipes through the local HBC store or from other local general merchants.

6.2.6 Ritual Items

Artifacts classified in the Ritual subcategory included all items of religious significance retrieved from the excavation of the St. Vital Cemetery (n=12). Despite their classification as ritual items, artifacts of religious significance recovered from a burial context may have served as grave offerings. Therefore, these items are again discussed in the following chapter.

The majority of ritual items recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery were identified as devotional medals (Figure 6.18). For the most part, devotional medals recovered from the excavation of the St. Vital Cemetery (n=8) were identifiable with a few minor exceptions.

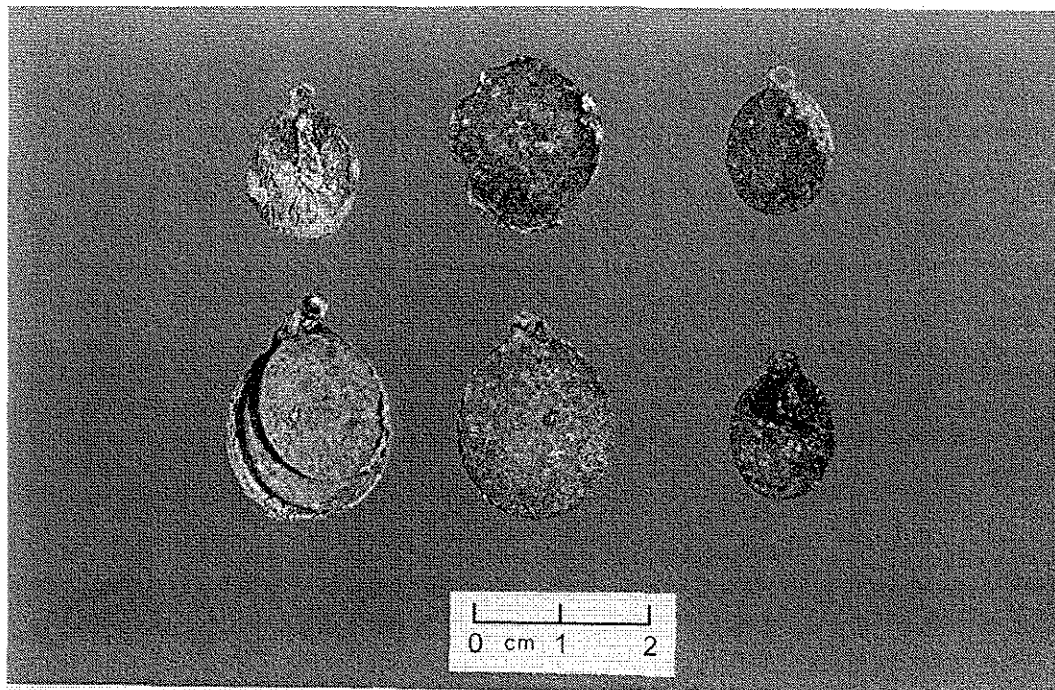


Figure 6.18 Variety of devotional medals.

All medallions were ovate in shape and varied only in size and decoration (Table 6.9). The recovery of devotional medals at the St. Vital Cemetery was crucial to the identification of its religious affiliation. Therefore, a lengthy description of these artifacts follows.

Devotional medals in general are defined as “a piece of medal, usually in the form of a coin, not used as money, but struck or cast for a commemorative purpose, and adorned with some appropriate effigy, device, or inscription” (Thurston 2002). Religious medals in particular were forged in honour of the lives of various saints, historical events, and sacred places. In the Roman Catholic faith, these items were frequently blessed by the parish priest and given as gifts for special occasions such as Holy Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation (Father Mann, personal communication 2003). In many cases, such religious medallions were worn around the necks of parishioners as a form of protection from the temptations of evil.

Table 6.9 Devotional Medallions from the St. Vital Cemetery (n=8)

Burial Feature	Medallion Type	Count	Measurements (length x width)
11	Unidentified	1	18.65mm x 12.89mm
18	Saint Benedict	2	17.37mm x 12.28mm
20	Our Lady of Lourdes	1	18.18mm x 12.89mm
24	Our Lady of Lourdes	1	24.48mm x 17.49mm
	Saint Lucy	1	20.65mm x 14.70mm
	Saint Michael	1	23.86mm x 16.98mm
	Miraculous	1	24.33mm x 18.03mm
Total			8

All medals recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery appeared to be made of copper alloy. According to Mark Mackenzie, Conservator for the Saskatchewan Western Development Museum (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan), the medals affiliated with the St. Vital Cemetery were subjected to fire-gilding as part of the manufacturing process. In this case, medals were silver plated in a cost-effective procedure that was frequently

employed for ecclesiastical items. Unfortunately, many of the medals from the St. Vital Cemetery were poorly preserved due to a process termed “bronze disease”. The effects of bronze disease begin with visible pitting of the surface of the medals, which is then followed by destruction of the historical layers proceeding from the inside out. Removal of the corrosion products, therefore, can lead to complete obliteration of the historical information necessary for identification of the medal (Mark Mackenzie personal communication 2003). Attempts were made to chemically remove the corrosion products, which proved to be effective in a number of cases.

Burial feature 24 yielded the highest concentration of devotional medallions (n=4). Upon initial examination, it was evident that one of the medallions in question was similar to that recovered from burial feature 18 (Miraculous Medallion). The function of the Miraculous Medallion recovered from burial 18 greatly differed from that of burial feature 24, as this medallion in particular functioned as part of a rosary. In this case, the Miraculous Medallion recovered from burial feature 24 performed a dual function. The Miraculous Medallion is described here. However, for classification purposes, it was considered to be part of the rosary.

Due to the effects of corrosion, portions of each Miraculous Medallion were obscured. Luckily, sufficient diagnostic features were visible, which allowed for straightforward identification. A robed figure with outstretched arms was depicted in the center of each medallion with multiple lines extending from the hands (Figure 6.19, left). A sequence of words was visible along the outer margins of the medallion. However, only a small number of letters were distinguishable on the medallion associated with burial feature 18 (CONCUE). The obverse face of each medallion bore the letter M, which was underlined and surmounted by a cross. At the base of the

medallion associated with burial feature 18 were two hearts positioned side by side (Figure 6.19, right). The accumulation of corrosion products did not allow for further examination of the medallion associated with burial feature 24.

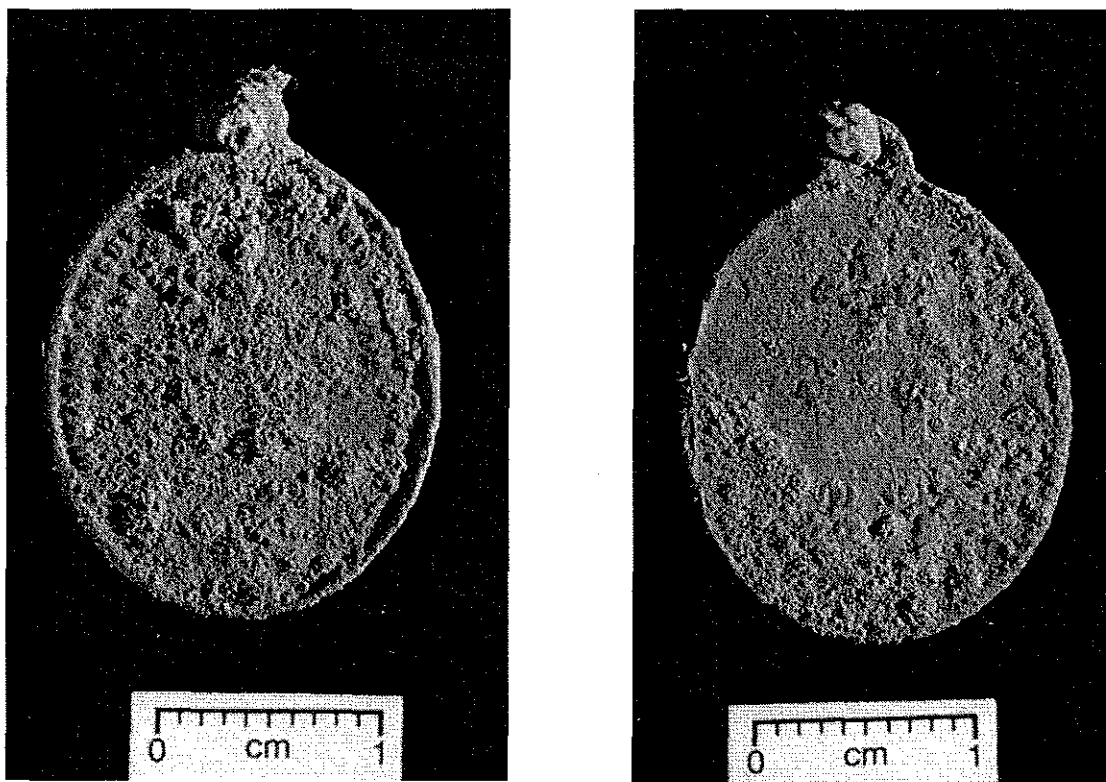


Figure 6.19 Miraculous Medallion recovered from burial feature 18.

The aforementioned description of the medallions recovered from burial features 18 and 24 was consistent with that of the Miraculous Medallion, a devotional medal commonly affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. The Miraculous Medallion was first struck on June 30th, 1832 in Paris to commemorate the sequence of apparitions of the Virgin Mary to Catherine Labouré, Sister of Charity.

According to Catherine, she was awakened on the night of July 18, 1830, by her guardian angel, who led her to the chapel. There Our Lady appeared and, while Catherine knelt at her knee, sat and talked for two hours, giving spiritual advice, predicting world calamities, and speaking of a mission for Catherine. In a second apparition, (Nov. 27, 1830) this mission was revealed when the novice beheld a picture of Mary standing on a globe with light streaming from her hands. Around the Virgin were the words in French "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us

who have recourse to thee.” After manifesting the miraculous medal, Mary entrusted to Catherine the inauguration of the devotion to it. A third vision (September 1831) was to the same effect (Dirvin 2003: 8: 267).

The Miraculous Medallion typically demonstrates the Virgin Mary robed and standing on a serpent with her arms outstretched and rays of light streaming from her hands. A simple prayer surrounds its circumference (see above). The Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary are situated on the obverse of the medallion. The Heart of Jesus is identified as that which bears the thorns, while the Heart of Mary is pierced by a sword. Above the two hearts lies the capital M, which is underlined and topped with a cross. The entirety of the medallion is surrounded by twelve small stars (Dirvin 2003: 9: 670).

The small fragment of the aforementioned prayer, which was visible on the medallion associated with burial feature 18 (CONCUE), confirmed that the prayer in this case was written in French. In the French language, the prayer reads “Marie Conçue Sans Pêché, Priez Pour Nous Qui Avons Recours A Vous” (Varsakis 2002:11).

By the end of the 1830s, over ten million Miraculous Medallions had been produced, their worldwide popularity due in part to the graces they supposedly offered those individuals that wore them (Burton 2001: 127). It is not surprising, therefore, to recover Miraculous Medallions from archaeological sites with a demonstrated affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church.

The Miraculous Medallions recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery were similar to those documented at various locations across western North America, including Lower Memaloose Island (Oregon), Salmon Arm (British Columbia), and Helena (Montana) (Varsakis 2002:12). Archaeologically, Miraculous Medallions have been excavated from a limited number of sites, including Rocky Mountain House (Alberta) and Fort Union (North Dakota), both of which were 19th-century fur trading sites. A

similar medallion was recovered from the excavations at the Métis Wintering Village of Petite Ville (Weinbender 2003). However, the medallion in this case was heart-shaped and integrated into the manufacture of a rosary.

The Miraculous Medallions from both Fort Union and Rocky Mountain House were retrieved from middens associated with the operation of the fur trading posts. It was likely that Roman Catholic Missionaries who frequented the area brought the medallions to the posts throughout the period of the fort's occupation. In both cases, it was not possible to pinpoint the ownership of the medallions due to the context in which they were found (Varsakis 2002). Additionally, the context of the medallions at both Fort Union and Rocky Mountain House did not portray the value afforded to these religious items by their owners.

The context of the Miraculous Medallions was most interesting in the case of the St. Vital Cemetery, as the medallions were retrieved from individual burial features. In this case, ownership was established unlike in the cases of Medallions found at Fort Union and Rocky Mountain House. The context of their discovery suggests that the Miraculous Medallion, and other devotional medals for that matter, were highly regarded by the parishioners of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Vital.

A number of other devotional medals were recovered from the excavations at the St. Vital Cemetery, including a single medallion of Saint Lucy (n=1), which was collected from the contents of burial feature 24. The medallion bore an image of a young woman holding what appeared to be a palm frond (Figure 6.20, left). The palm frond was grasped in the individual's right hand and crossed over her chest to lie on her left shoulder. An unidentified object was held in the left hand of the individual, although it resembled a dish or a plate. On the right margin of the medallion the word PRIEZ

("Pray") likely represented the remnants of the French phrase "Priez Pour Nous" ("Pray For Us"), which was commonly depicted on devotional medals struck in honour of patron saints. On the opposite side of the medallion was the image of an unidentified young man wearing what appeared to be a cleric's robe (Figure 6.20, right). This side of the medallion also bore signs of a written prayer. Poor preservation and the accumulation of corrosion products hindered its identification.

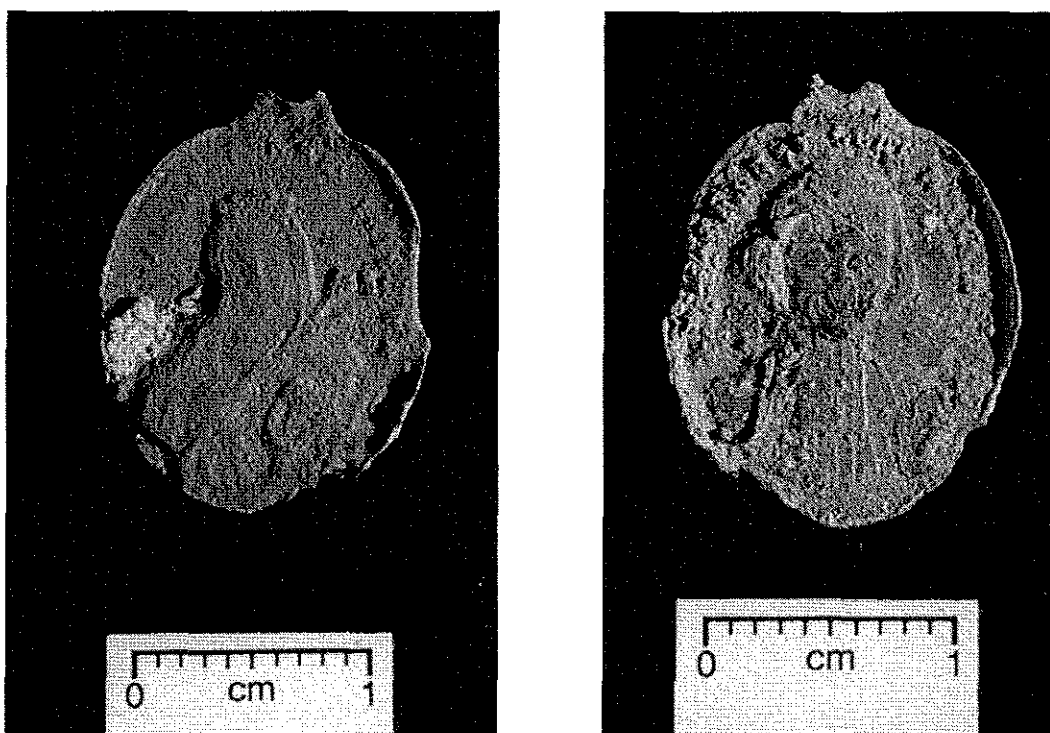


Figure 6.20 Saint Lucy Medallion. Saint Lucy herself is pictured on the left. The unidentified individual is pictured on the right.

Based on comparisons to contemporary devotional medals and various artistic representations of the patron saints, this particular medallion was identified as that of Saint Lucy. Saint Lucy, a virgin martyr from Syracuse, was tortured and killed by the order of the Governor of Sicily due to her failure to comply with an arranged marriage to Paschius. Lucy vowed to devote her life to Christ. First, Lucy's eyes were reputedly torn out, only to be restored by the grace of God. Attempts were then made to burn Lucy at

the stake but she was once again saved by her undying faith. Finally, Lucy succumbed to death by stabbing (Bridge 2003).

In artistic representations, Lucy “patroness of the eyes, is frequently portrayed with two eyes in a dish. She appears also with a palm of martyrdom, a lamp (or a book), and a sword (or a knife) in her neck” (Ryan 2003:8: 849). As previously mentioned, the individual portrayed on the medallion associated with burial feature 24 appeared to be holding a palm frond and a possible dish. Further in-depth research is necessary in order to identify the individual portrayed on the obverse of this medallion.

Yet another medallion retrieved from burial feature 24 was similar in dimensions to the Miraculous Medallion (Table 6.9). In this case, the images depicted were affiliated with Saint Michael (n=1). One side of the medallion depicted the profile of a winged individual (an angel) whose right arm was raised and flexed in position (Figure 6.21, right). The angel appeared to be walking with a young child. The scene described was interpreted as that of a guardian angel guiding a young child on his way. Belief in Guardian angels is common throughout the Christian community, where “each human soul, when infused into the body, is entrusted to the particular care of a single angel, who protects both body and soul and offers prayers to God” (Farmer 1978: 183).

One angel in particular that was frequently discussed throughout the Bible was the archangel Michael. Interestingly, the obverse of the medallion depicting the guardian angel and child displayed a winged individual thought to be Saint Michael. Saint Michael, the archangel, was responsible for protecting the faithful and fighting the everlasting battle with evil (Farmer 1978: 277).

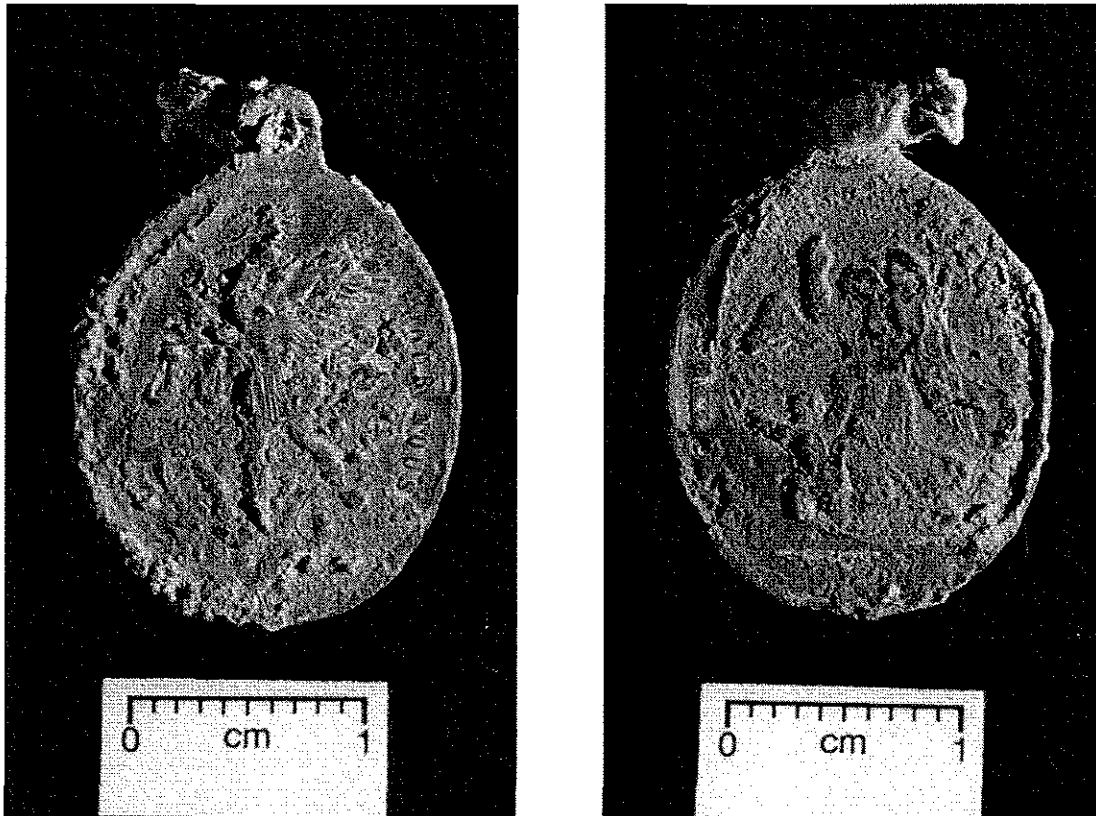


Figure 6.21 Saint Michael medallion. Saint Michael is pictured on the left. A guardian angel and child are pictured on the right.

The individual represented on the medallion appears to be holding a shield in one hand and what seemed to be a balance in the other. On the right-hand margin of the medallion were the words “POUR NOUS” (“For Us”), which suggests that the medallion once read “Sainte Michel, Priez Pour Nous” (Figure 6.21, left).

In artistic representations, Saint Michael was frequently depicted wearing a knight’s costume and standing atop a dragon (the devil). A balance was commonly held within his grasp for the purpose of weighing souls (Tsuji 2003: 1: 425). Saint Michael also possessed a special affiliation with the dead and the dying, as he was deemed the patron saint of cemeteries and was commonly associated with the care of the sick (Farmer 1978: 278). In this case, it was not surprising to find a medallion of Saint

Michael in a burial context. A plausible explanation for its presence may be that the medallion was given to the individual associated with burial feature 24 just prior to death. Unfortunately, the circumstances surrounding the receipt of this medallion by the associated individual remains unknown and any suggestions of its significance is pure speculation.

The final medallion recovered from burial feature 24 was a medallion of Our Lady of Lourdes (n=1). Displayed on one side of the medallion was a robed individual in relief standing within an opening (Figure 6.22, left). The arms of the individual appeared to be clasped and resting on the chest. At first glance, it seemed that the individual represented was the Virgin Mary. This proposed identification was not confirmed until after examination of both sides of the medallion.

The opposite face of the medallion was easily identified due to the characteristic nature of the scene depicted and written information displayed at its base. The scene depicted in this case was that of the same robed individual standing within a grotto, with a smaller individual kneeling at its base. The remnant of a written message was noted around the circumference of the medallion. However, only a limited number of letters were distinguishable due to corrosion of the medallion (PE__TE). Along the inferior edge of the medallion was the date “1858”, surmounted by a single word identified by the author as “LOURDES” (Figure 6.22, right).

The tell-tale scene depicted on both faces of the medallion in question confirmed its initial identification as a medallion of Our Lady of Lourdes. This style of medallion was forged to commemorate a series of apparitions of the Virgin Mary. On 18 separate occasions between February 11th and July 16th, 1858 the Mother of God appeared to 14 year-old Bernadette Soubirous at the rock of Massabielle in Lourdes, France.

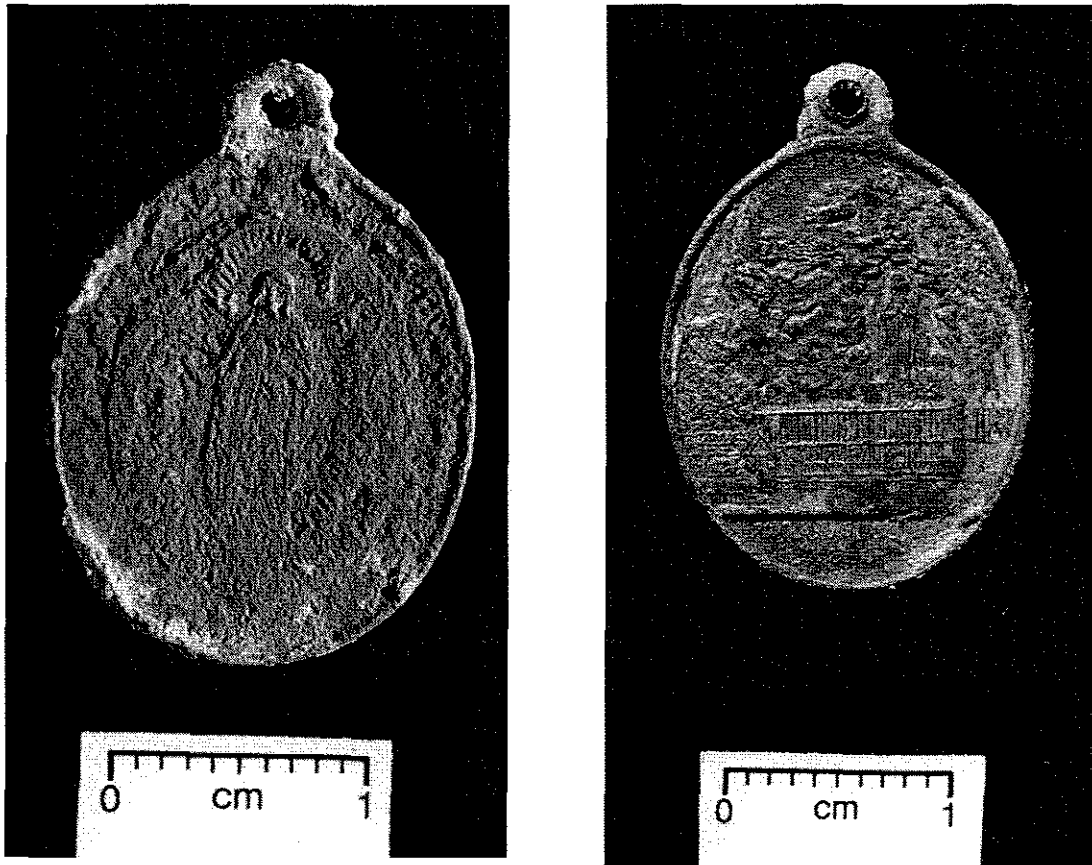


Figure 6.22 Our Lady of Lourdes Medallion recovered from burial feature 24.

Initially, Bernadette was unaware that the figure standing before her was the Virgin Mary as she first appeared to Bernadette as a “young girl dressed in white holding a rosary” (Casey 2003: 13: 331). It was not until the 16th apparition that Mary identified herself as the Immaculate Conception, after which “she ordered the building of a church, and told Bernadette to drink from a spring, which from that time until the present day produces 27,000 gallons of water a week” (Farmer 1978: 39). News of the holy apparitions quickly spread. However, only Bernadette was able to see the image standing before her. Unlike the Miraculous Medallion, the precise date of manufacture for the medallion in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes was not encountered throughout the course of this research. The earliest date possible for its manufacture would lie sometime

after July 16th, 1858, the date of the final apparition at Lourdes to Bernadette Soubirous. Interestingly, Bernadette Soubirous was often called “Little Bernadette” likely due to the undersized stature of the ailing child (Farmer 1978: 39). In this case, the limited text visible around the circumference of the medallion (PE__TE) perhaps represented the French translation of Little (“PETITE”) Bernadette.

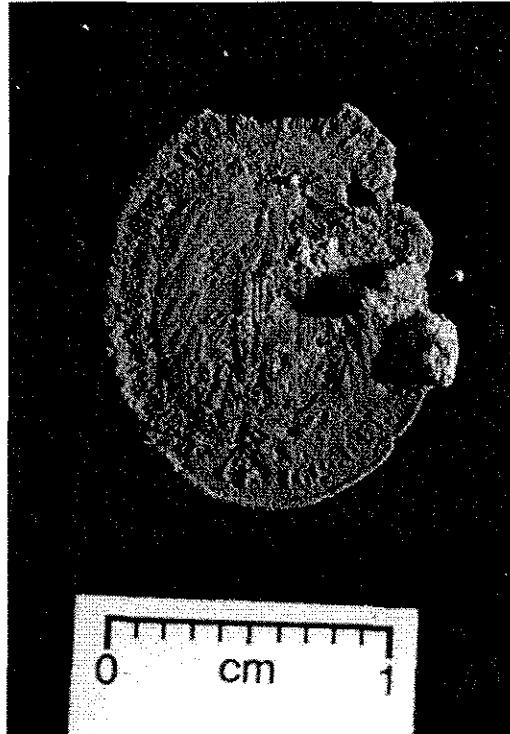


Figure 6.23 Our Lady of Lourdes Medallion recovered from burial feature 20.

Another medallion in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes was recovered from the contents of burial feature 20 (n=1). However, the image depicted was vastly different from that of the medallion recovered from burial feature 24. Unfortunately, due to the deposition of corrosion products, it was only possible to decipher the images displayed on a single side of the medallion. The visible face of the medallion displayed a host of laurel leaves, which surrounded its circumference (Figure 6.23). Along the base of the medallion along the right-hand margin was the word “LOURDES”, which led to the

identification of the medallion as one which was manufactured in honour of the apparitions to Bernadette Soubirous. It is possible that the medallion in question simply represented a different style of devotional medal used to commemorate the same miraculous events.

Aside from the Miraculous Medallion previously described, burial feature 18 yielded two medallions of Saint Benedict (n=2). Differential preservation was observed between the two medallions. Therefore, only the better preserved medallion was used for identification and descriptive purposes (Figure 6.24). Due to the deposition of corrosion products, it was only possible to decipher the images displayed on a single side of the medallion. Luckily, the visible images were sufficient to allow identification of the medallions in question.

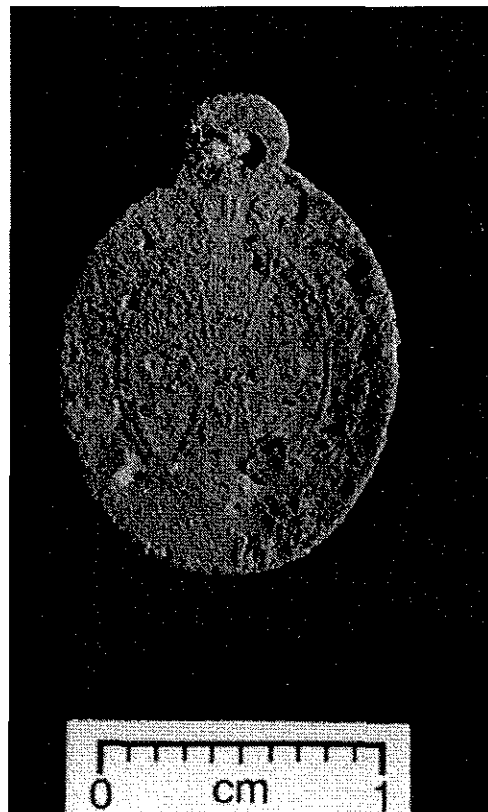


Figure 6.24 Saint Benedict medallion recovered from burial feature 18.

A large cross nearly spanned the entire surface of the medallion, above which were the initials "I.H.S." (Jesus). Along the right-hand margin of the medallion were a number of letters, of which it was only possible to decipher a few due to poor preservation (R.S.N.). Within the horizontal bar of the cross was a series of letters. The initials "N.D." were visible on the left, while the letters "M. D." were visible on the right. Across the vertical bar of the crucifix were the initials "C.S.S." The image portrayed on the medallions was easily identified upon comparison to various descriptions and contemporary replicas of religious medals.

The devotion to Saint Benedict, the monastic founder, was portrayed through the manufacture of religious medals, of which there existed two forms. The "Ordinary Medal" and the "Jubilee" (or "Centenary") Medal were very similar in appearance, although documentary sources suggest that the Jubilee Medal was the more popular of the two. The Ordinary Medal appears to be the generic medallion of Saint Benedict, while the Jubilee Medal was struck in 1880 to commemorate the 1400th anniversary of the patron saint. The following quotation serves as a detailed description of Saint Benedict's Jubilee Medal:

"The 'Jubilee' medal depicts on one side Benedict holding in his hands a cross and his rule. On the other side there is a cruciform design with the letters C.S.P.B., which corresponds to the Latin phrase "Crux Sancti Patris Benedicti" (Cross of our Holy Father Benedict). On the perpendicular bar of the cross are the letters C.S.S.M.L., which correspond to the Latin phrase "Crux Sacra Sit Mihi Lux" (May the holy cross be a light to me). On the horizontal bar are the letters N.D.S.M.D., which correspond to the Latin phrase "Non Draco Sit Mihi Dux" (Let not the dragon [devil] be my guide). Around the margin are the letters V.R.S.N.S.M.V.S.M.Q.L.I.V.B., which correspond to the Latin verse, "Vade Retro Satana! Numquam Mihi Vana. Sunt Mala Quae Libas; Ipse Venena" (Get behind me, Satan! Do not persuade me with your vanities. The libation you offer me is evil; go drink your own poison). The motto of the Benedictine Order, "Pax", is found above the cross. On the side of the medal depicting St. Benedict, there are scenes of the poisoned cup, shattered by the sign of the cross, as well as of the raven, ready to carry away the poisoned loaf of bread sent to him. Above

the cup and the raven stands the phrase “Crux S. Patris Benedicti” (Cross of Holy Father Benedict). Around the border of one side stands the phrase “Ejus in obitu nostropresantia muniamur” (May we be protected by his presence at our death)” (Rippinger 2003: 2: 238).

As previously mentioned, the medallions of Saint Benedict retrieved from the St. Vital Cemetery displayed the letters “I.H.S.” above the cruciform design, as opposed to the motto “P.A.X.” (Peace) present on Saint Benedict’s Jubilee Medal. The sporadic letters visible on the medallions in question appear to be fragmentary remnants of the phrases described above in detail.

A similar medallion of Saint Benedict was recovered near Willow Bunch in southern Saskatchewan (Kennedy 2002). In this case, both sides of the medallion were well-preserved, thereby allowing for complete identification. The medallion discovered at Willow Bunch differed from the description of the Jubilee Medallion in two respects. Firstly, like the medallions from burial feature 18, the letters I.H.S. replaced the motto of the Benedictine Order (P.A.X.) on the portion of the medallion housing the Benedictine Cross. Additionally, the phrase “Ejus in obitu nostropresantia muniamur” was not present on the obverse of the medallion. This phrase is present on the Jubilee Medal. Perhaps in this case and in the case of the medallions recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery, the Willow Bunch medallion was simply the Ordinary Medal of Saint Benedict. Further research is necessary to determine the original date of manufacture of the Ordinary Medal.

The final religious medal recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery was discovered within the contents of burial feature 11 (n=1). Regretfully, the identification of this medallion in particular was not possible due to poor preservation. The small medallion was likely worn around the neck of the individual as indicated by the fragmentary

remains of thin brown cord (Figure 6.25). The fragmented cord measured 61.53mm in length and was 1.13mm thick. Alongside the medallion was a cross of copper alloy (n=1), which was also included in the ritual subcategory (Figure 6.25). The cross was small in size, measuring 27.88mm in length and 17.77mm at its maximum width. The cross also appears to have been worn around the neck due to preservation of thin brown cord associated with the artifact. The fragmented cord measured 42.47mm in length and was 1.23mm thick and appeared to be separate from the cord used to suspend the unidentified medallion recovered from the same burial feature.

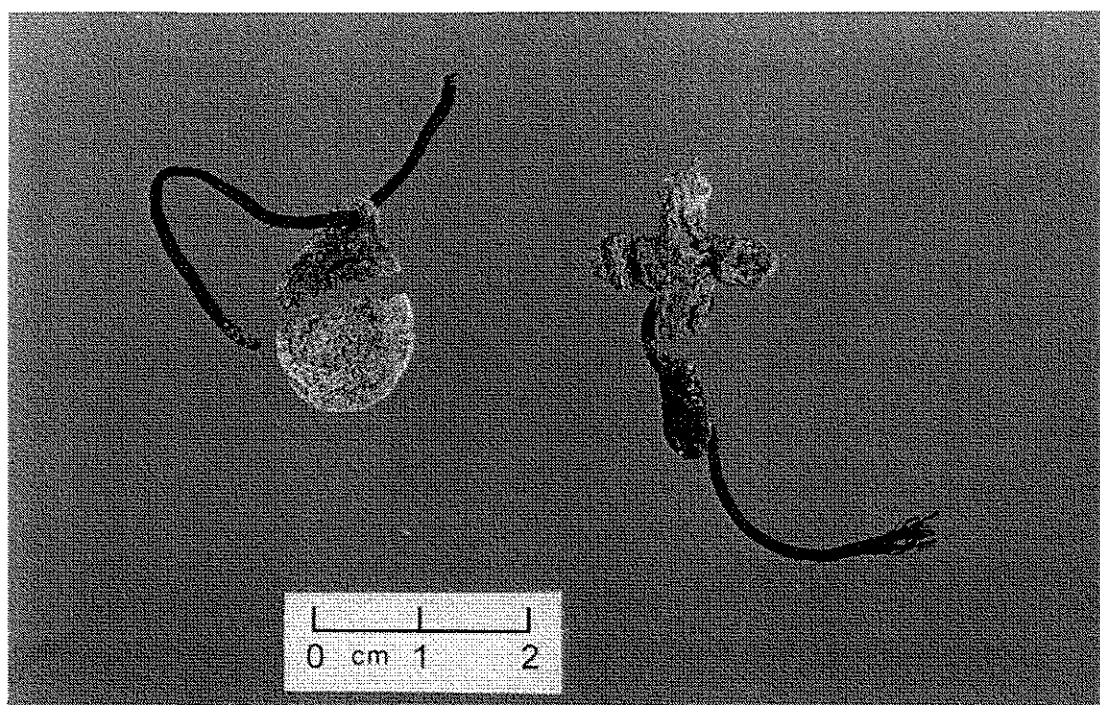


Figure 6.25 Unidentified devotional medal and cross recovered from burial feature 11. Note preserved brown cord.

Also included in the Ritual subcategory was a small glass vial recovered from the contents of burial feature 26 (n=1). The vial was highly fragmented due to the delicate nature of the glass (Figure 6.26). Attempts to reconstruct the vial failed, although it was possible to estimate the length of the vial as no more than a few inches. From the

individual fragments of glass, it was possible to estimate the diameter of the rim (12.89mm) and the thickness (0.49mm). The shape of the fragments corresponding to the neck of the vial and the shape of the rim suggest that the vial was likely sealed with a cork.

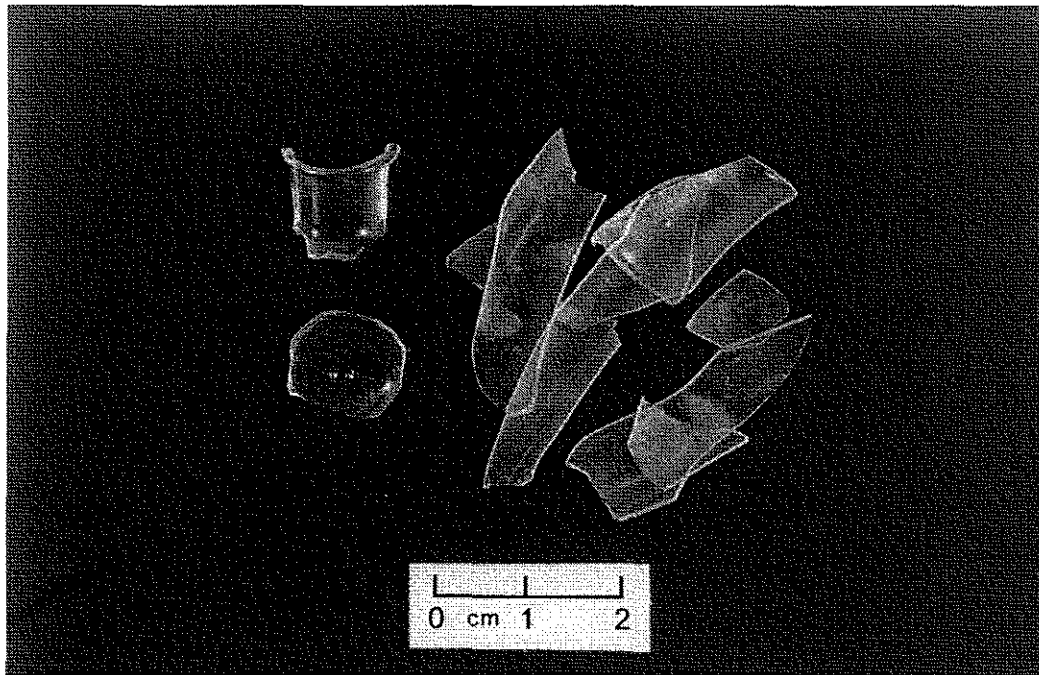


Figure 6.26 Fragmented glass vial recovered from burial feature 26.

At the time of its placement within the coffin of burial feature 26, the vial may have contained perfume (Father Gaudet, personal communication 2001) or holy water. Holy water was often used in Sacraments of the Catholic Church, including Holy Baptism, and as part of funerary services for the blessing of the dead.

The Ritual subcategory also included the remnants of a possible rosary discovered within the contents of burial feature 18 (n=1). The rosary was found slightly inferior to the hands of the individual, which were crossed on the pelvis in accordance with Christian burial practices (see Chapter Seven). Extreme corrosion of the chain joining the beads impeded identification of the material type (Figure 6.27). The small

round beads appeared to be made of wood, averaging 5.62mm in diameter and 5.58mm in height. Since the beads of the rosary were preserved in a solid concentrated mass, it was difficult to accurately determine the number of beads present ($n = \text{ca. } 45$).

Associated with the beads was a small cross and a Miraculous Medallion. The cross measured 25.76mm in length and 18.03mm at its maximum width. The medallion measured 20.37mm in length and 17.58mm at its maximum width.

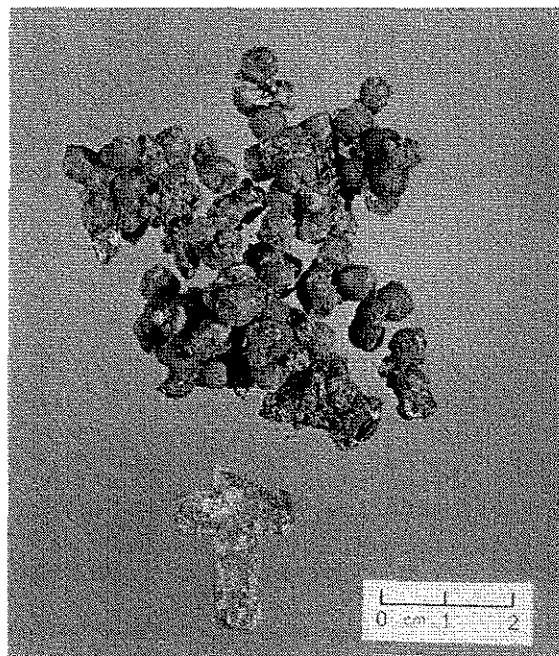


Figure 6.27 Rosary recovered from burial feature 18.

Rosaries in general are relics of the Roman Catholic Church, consisting of a series of beads used for the purpose of reciting and counting prayers (Thurston and Shipman 2002). Typically, a rosary was constructed of 59 beads, in addition to a cross and a small medallion. It is possible that a number of rosary beads were overlooked within the contents of burial feature 18, as the soil within its contents was only quickly screened for the recovery of small artifacts.

Archaeological recovery of rosaries was documented both at Petite Ville (Weinbender 2003) and at the Buffalo Lake Métis Site in Alberta (Doll et al 1988). In both cases, the rosaries were much more ornate and better preserved than that recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery. For instance, the rosary discovered at Petite Ville included 13 monochrome white glass beads that were ovoid in shape and possessed a series of ridges around their circumference. The links between the beads of the rosary were formed of copper wire and a small heart-shaped Miraculous Medallion attached to the chains of the rosary through three small loops (Weinbender 2003: 85). The Buffalo Lake rosary consisted of 23 barrel-shaped blue glass beads and an undecorated brass cross. The beads were linked by brass wire and seemed to be decorated in a similar manner to those of the Petite Ville Rosary (Doll et al 1988: 116). Like the medallion associated with the St. Vital rosary, the medallion discovered at the Buffalo Lake site was ovate in shape and possessed only a single loop for attachment purposes. Variation observed in the type of medallions used in the manufacture of rosaries suggests that rosaries were perhaps available in various styles. Regrettably, the Buffalo Lake medallion was too corroded for identification.

6.2.7 Pocket Tools and Accessories

The Pocket Tools and Accessories subcategory consisted of a pocket knife (n=1) that was recovered from the contents of burial feature 11 (Figure 6.16a). Detailed identification was hindered by the deposition of corrosion products, although the knife appeared to be constructed of bone. The majority of the knife's surface was stained green, likely due to prolonged contact with copper alloys. Originally broken in half, the knife was refitted in order to take the appropriate measurements. The knife measured 84.91mm in length and 12.50mm at its maximum width.

6.3 Domestic Items

All artifacts classified in the Domestic category fit into the Furnishings subcategory (n=2). A picture frame was recovered from the contents of burial feature 14 as part of a bundle containing various other artifacts. In this case, the contents of the bundle, including the picture frame in question, may have functioned as grave offerings (see Chapter Seven).

The wooden frame measured 94.32mm in length and 60.84mm in width and was adorned along its top edge with a succession of five evenly spaced punctates (Figure 6.28). The center of the crudely constructed frame appeared to have been cut to fit the odd shape of the two window glass fragments. The average thickness of the window glass was 1.84mm. Due to the crude construction of the small picture frame, it was likely that this artifact was handmade.

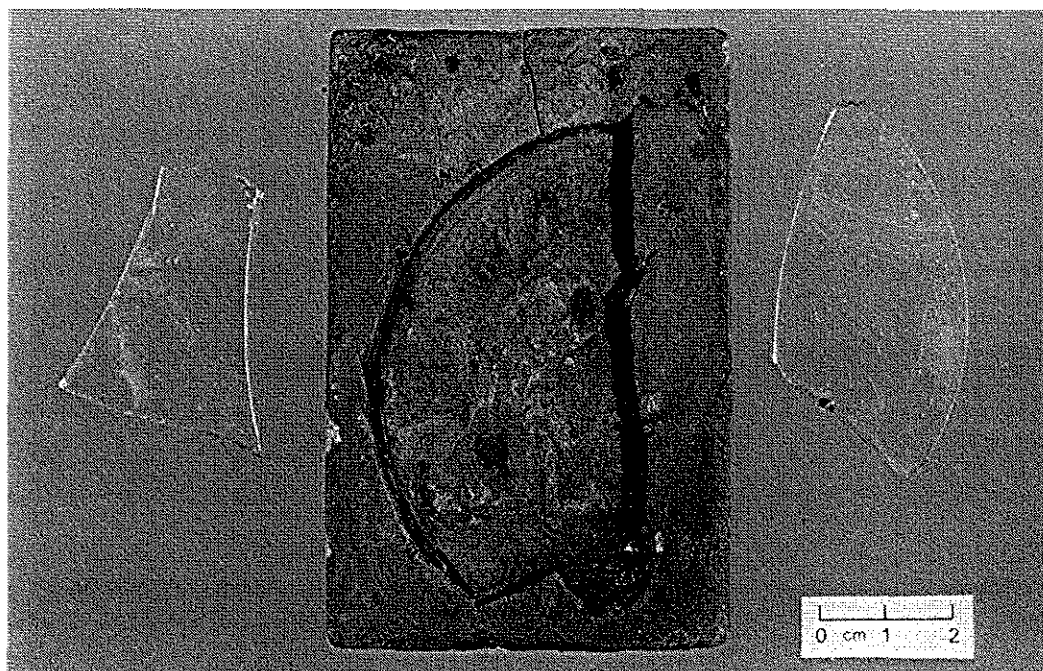


Figure 6.28 Picture frame recovered from burial feature 14.

A mass of desiccated feathers that was retrieved from the contents of burial feature 27 was also included in the Furnishings subcategory. Quantification of the feathers was not possible, as only a small sample was collected from the cemetery excavation. Perhaps these feathers represented the remnants of a small feather pillow on which the head of the individual was placed for burial. According to Father Gaudet (personal communication 2001), coffins were often lined with a bed sheet and an old cushion was placed under the head of the deceased.

6.4 Architecture

The Architecture category consisted of artifacts used in the construction of coffins, including ornamental tacks, nails, screws, and wood.

6.4.1 Adornment

The Adornment subcategory was developed to account for the presence of brass and composite ornamental tacks, which were used to decorate the otherwise plainly constructed coffins. Coffins adorned with tacks are listed in Table 6.10. As previously mentioned, only a sample of composite and brass tacks were collected from the site. Therefore quantitative data are not included here. Tacks formed entirely of brass possessed a circular dome-shaped head (Figure 6.29d). The head of brass tacks ranged in size from 8.93mm to 10.59mm in diameter. Composite tacks were different in appearance as compared to those manufactured completely of brass. Klimko (1983: 245) described this style of tack as being made “by rolling a piece of yellow metal into a tight cone and attaching a head”. Accordingly, the shank and inner portions of the composite tacks recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery were ferrous, while the outer coating of the head was made of brass (Figure 6.29e).

Table 6.10 Presence/Absence Data for Ornamental Tacks Recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery

Burial Feature	Brass Tacks	Composite Tacks
4		+
5A		+
5B		+
11	+	
15	+	
18	+	
22		+
Surface Scatter	+	+

In general, ornamental tacks were commonly employed for securing upholstery (Ettlinger 1998: 176). Preservation of fabric under many tacks recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery suggests these were used to secure fabric to the exterior of the coffins.

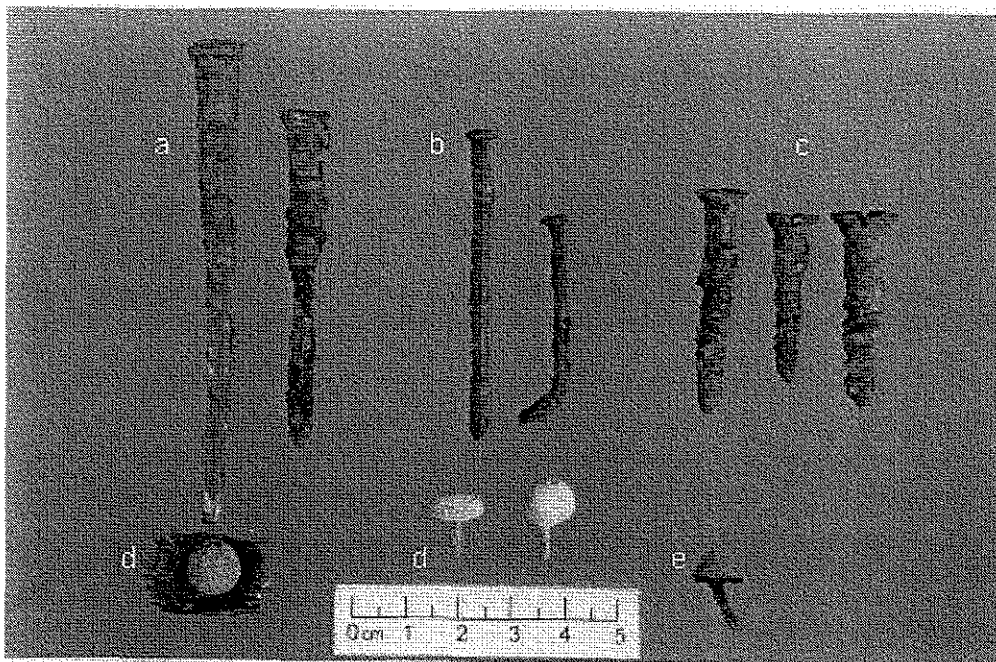


Figure 6.29 Architectural Items recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery. Note the preservation of fabric under brass tack (bottom left).

6.4.2 Hardware

The Hardware subcategory included slotted screws and nails of various types (Figure 6.29). All artifacts classified here were ferrous in material type. Once again, only

a small sample of construction hardware was collected from the site. As a result, quantitative information was not included in this section to avoid severe misrepresentation (Table 6.11).

Table 6.11 Presence/ Absence Data for Construction Hardware Recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery

Burial Feature	Machine-cut Nails	Drawn Nails	Slotted Screws
2	+		
4	+		
5A	+	+	
7	+	+	+
8	+	+	
10	+		
11	+		+
17	+		
19	+		
20	+	+	
21	+		
22	+		+
23	+		+
24	+		+
26	+		+
27		+	+
29		+	
30	+		
Surface Scatter	+		

The most common artifacts classified in the Hardware subcategory were nails. All nails were measured in imperial units (inches). Nails possessing both rectangular heads and shanks were categorized as machine-cut nails (Figure 6.29a). Fully intact machine-cut nails ranged in size from 1.5” to 4.0”. Alternatively, nails possessing both round heads and round shanks were classified as drawn nails (Figure 6.29b). Fully intact drawn nails ranged in size from 1.75” to 2.5”.

Various chronologies of nail manufacture have been proposed by a number of authors (Kogon and Mayer 1995, Wells 1998, Nelson 1966). The primary difficulty encountered here is that most chronologies of nail manufacture developed to date are

regionally-dependant. Despite regional variance in nail chronology, a few general North American trends were noted. In general, the transition from hand-wrought nails to machine-cut types took place in the late 18th-century/early 19th-century due to advances in technology. Drawn nails began to appear in North America in the 1870s. However, “wire nails in North America were not produced in significant quantities until the mid-1880s” (Adams 2002: 69). In this case, the presence of both machine-cut and drawn nails in the St. Vital Cemetery assemblage was consistent with the proposed period of its use (1879-1885) as a burial ground.

In addition to machine-cut and drawn nails, ferrous slotted screws were also used as hardware for the construction of coffins (Figure 6.29c). The total length of whole screws only ranged from 1.0”-1.5”.

6.4.3 Materials

The Materials subcategory consisted of samples of wood used for coffin construction and samples of wood shavings. A small sample of wood was retained from 17 burial features in total. Wood samples were analyzed by Antoine Beriault of the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative (PARC) in Regina, Saskatchewan in order to determine the genus and species represented. Due to the poor preservation of wood samples, it was not possible to determine the type of wood used for the construction of coffins associated with burial features 10, 15, 17, 20, and 27. The remaining 12 samples of wood were identified as *Picea glauca*, otherwise known as white spruce (Antoine Beriault, personal communication 2004).

Wood shavings lined the coffins associated with burial features 14 and 17 (see Chapter Seven for significance). Determination of the species represented was not possible in either case.

Table 6.12 Wood Samples Collected from the St. Vital Cemetery (n=17)

Burial Feature	Wood Identification
4	<i>Picea glauca</i>
7	<i>Picea glauca</i>
8	<i>Picea glauca</i>
10	Unidentified
11	<i>Picea glauca</i>
14	<i>Picea glauca</i>
15	Unidentified
17	Unidentified
20	Unidentified
21	<i>Picea glauca</i>
22	<i>Picea glauca</i>
23	<i>Picea glauca</i>
24	<i>Picea glauca</i>
27	Possible <i>Picea glauca</i>
28	<i>Picea glauca</i>
29	<i>Picea glauca</i>
30	<i>Picea glauca</i>

6.5 Precontact Materials

The only item of precontact manufacture recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery consisted of a single primary platform rejuvenation flake (weight=1.3g) of silicified siltstone (Barb Neal, personal communication 2001). This artifact was collected from the contents of burial feature 12. The individual associated with burial feature 12 was interred without the use of a coffin. In this case, it is possible that the artifact in question was present in the soil prior to the interment of this individual.

6.6 Unidentified Items

Artifacts were classified in the Unidentified subcategory for one of two reasons. These items were either unidentifiable due to fragmentary preservation or further in-depth research would be required to unveil their identity.

6.6.1 Unidentified Metal

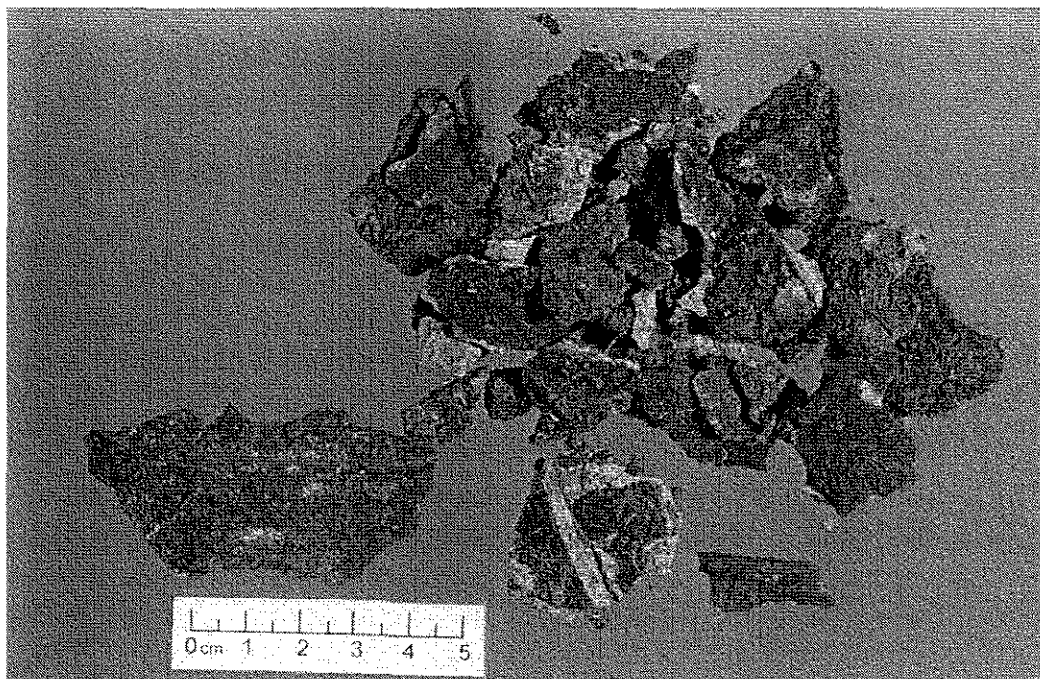


Figure 6.30 Unidentified ferrous artifact recovered from burial feature 12.

Two artifacts that escaped identification were recovered from the contents of burial feature 12. A rusted can or cup was discovered near the right arm of the individual. Upon removal from the soil, the artifact fragmented into a number of pieces (n=57 fragments). A number of fragments possessed single folded edges while others displayed a seam through their center, suggestive of the general shape of the item thereby enabling temporary identification of the vessel's shape (Figure 6.30).

A small unidentified artifact made of brass (n=1) was recovered near the right side of the cranium of the same individual (Figure 6.31). The artifact was manufactured of a thin sheet of brass (thickness=0.69mm) and was pinched at its center. It measured 37.66mm in length and 7.62mm in width. It was suggested that perhaps the artifact served as a hair clip, although this proposed identification was never confirmed. Despite

in-depth investigation of its identity, the artifact in question regrettably escaped identification.

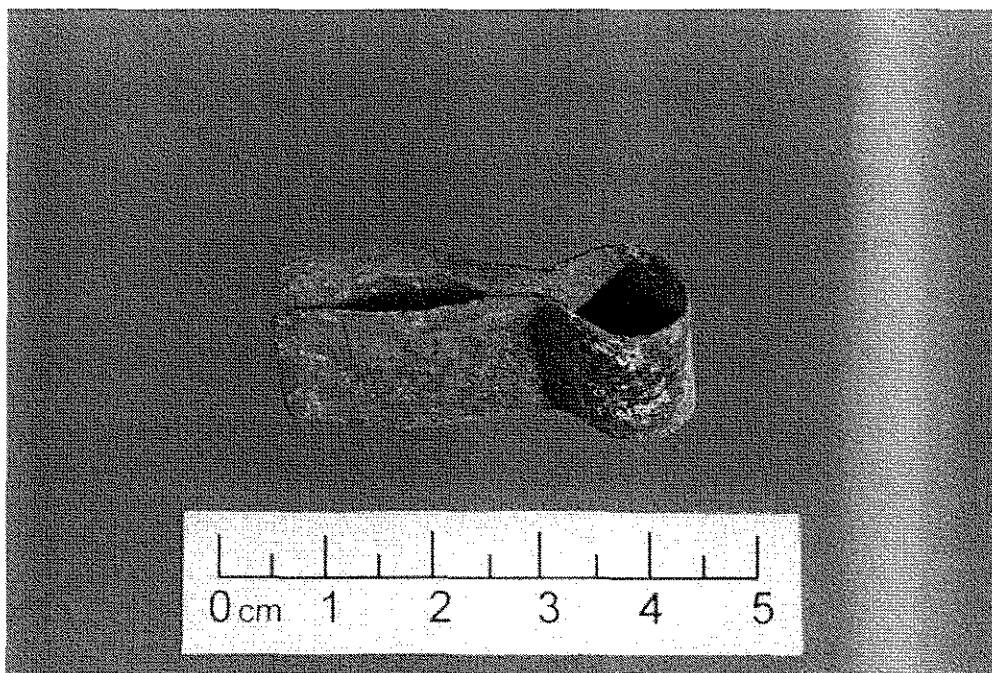


Figure 6.31 Unidentified brass artifact recovered from burial feature 12.

Three fragments of metal that were uncovered from the contents of burial features 11 (n=2) and 15 (n=1) seemed to resemble portions of ferrous overall buckles. However, severe corrosion rendered identification impossible. A small circular piece of brass (diameter=10.37mm) with a central perforation was retrieved from burial feature 26 (n=1). This may have represented a portion of a small snap-closure button. Three unidentified brass artifacts recovered from burial feature 17 appeared to be the shank portion of snap-closure buttons, although this identification was not confirmed. These consisted of a circular head ranging in diameter from 9.25 to 11.56mm, and an attached shank, ranging from 1.68 to 2.30mm in length. Small unidentified pieces of severely corroded metal (ferrous) were collected from the contents of burial features 24 (n=1), 26 (n=1), and 28 (n=2).

6.6.2 Unidentified Organic

The Unidentified Organic subcategory included all unidentifiable organic materials collected from the St. Vital Cemetery that were not included in the fabric analysis. Small fragments of charcoal were recovered from the contents of burial features 5 (n=4) and 30 (n=13). The inclusion of charcoal within the coffins associated with these burial features occurred for reasons yet unknown.

At the base of the coffin associated with feature 17 were five small fragments of what was tentatively identified as straw. Straw may have been employed to line the coffin of the associated individual. However, it was more likely that this material represented the intrusive roots of surrounding weeds that grew in the vicinity of the coffin. A small fragment of wood recovered from the grave fill of burial feature 23 proved to be interesting. The wood was perforated at one end perhaps for the purposes of attachment and was carved along three of its edges. The fragment of wood measured 30.00mm in length, 14.02mm in width, and was 4.12mm thick. The perforation measured 2.50mm in diameter. It is possible that this small piece of wood once formed the arm of a crucifix that was placed atop the coffin of burial feature 23 for the funeral service.

6.6.3 Unidentified Miscellaneous

A single item classified in the Unidentified Miscellaneous subcategory was recovered from the contents of burial feature 28. The material was pink in colour and of unknown identity. Due to the disturbed nature of the burial in this case, the material in question may have been located in the grave fill and not within the contents of the coffin itself.

6.7 Fabric Analysis

Fabric samples recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery were subjected to laboratory analysis for identification purposes (Tables 6.13 and 6.14). Theoretically, it is possible to distinguish characteristic morphological features of both natural and artificial fibers using a variety of laboratory methods. Light microscopy and burn analysis were employed to determine the specific fiber type used in the manufacture of fabric recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery. The protocol for fiber identification was according to that outlined by Matthews (1904). In addition, fabric samples were examined using a dissecting microscope for the purposes of weave identification. The weave of the various fabric samples was compared to those described by Emery (1966) for the purposes of identification.

According to Jakes (2000: 51), analysis of fabric recovered from an archaeological context is difficult, as the samples generally “display an altered morphology and chemistry, changes rendering them unidentifiable by standard optical microscope techniques”. Jakes later refers to light microscopy as the “mainstay of fiber analysis” (Jakes 2000: 53). Burn analysis of archaeological fabric samples is also problematic due to the changes in the chemistry of the fibers that accrue over time (Jakes 2000: 54).

Analysis of the fabric recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery was problematic to say the least. The majority of the fabric samples were highly desiccated, which made determination of both the fiber type and weave rather challenging. In a few rare cases, fabric preservation was superb.

Table 6.13 Plant-based Fabric Samples Recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery

Burial Feature	Colour	Distinguishing features	Fiber Type	Weave	Provenience
7	Dark Brown	n/a	Unidentified cellulose	Unidentified	Floor of coffin
11	Dark Brown	n/a	Cotton	Balanced plain weave (1/1)	Pelvic area
	White	Green and red plaid	Cotton	Balanced plain weave (1/1)	Right shoulder region
	Dark brown	n/a	Unidentified cellulose	Unbalanced plain weave (1/1)	Under and around cranium
	White	n/a	Cotton	Balanced plain weave (1/1)	Under ornamental tacks layered with dark brown wool
15	Dark Brown	n/a	Cotton/ wool blend	Unidentified	Pelvic region
17	Black	n/a	Unidentified cellulose	Balanced plain weave (1/1)	Coffin interior
18	Reddish brown	n/a	Cotton	Balanced plain weave (1/1)	Underneath upper body
20	Red	n/a	Cotton	Balanced plain weave (1/1)	Unknown
	Dark Green	n/a	Cotton	Plain crochet stitch	Unknown
22	Black	n/a	Cotton	Balanced plain weave (1/1)	Coffin interior
23	Dark Brown	n/a	Unidentified cellulose	Unidentified	Coffin interior
24	Dark Brown	n/a	Cotton	Unwoven	Unknown
	Dark brown	n/a	Unidentified cellulose	Balanced plain weave (1/1)	Floor of coffin
28	Dark brown	n/a	Unidentified cellulose	Semi-basket weave (2/1)	Lower body
29	Dark Brown	n/a	Unidentified cellulose	Uneven 3/1 twill	Coffin interior

Due to the effects of decomposition, it was especially difficult to determine the function of the various fabric samples collected from the St. Vital Cemetery. The role of fabric samples collected from the exterior of intact coffins was rather straightforward. In such instances, it was likely that the fabric represented the remnants of cloth that once enveloped the exterior of the coffin. On the other hand, fabric samples recovered from

the interior of coffins was representative of either remnant clothing or lining of the coffin itself (Tables 6.13 and 6.14).

Overall, differential preservation was slight between plant and animal fibers recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery, although it seemed that fabric composed of animal fibers such as wool preserved more so than those samples composed of plant fibers such as cotton (Tables 6.13 and 6.14). According to Janaway (1987: 135), optimal preservation of cellulose occurs in a burial environment where the soil pH is high and the fabric is preserved under anaerobic conditions. The pH of the sandy soil collected from the St. Vital Cemetery was slightly acidic (Treena Swanston, personal communication 2003), which may have led to preferential preservation of animal fibers used to form wool and silk.

In general, the types of fabric collected from the excavation of the St. Vital Cemetery were simple in design. The relative absence of variety in the colour of the garments was also noted, as most of the fabric recovered (regardless of fiber type) was brown in colour (Table 6.13 and 6.14). The fabric samples recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery were typical of durable clothing fabricated for everyday wear.

Table 6.14 Animal-based Fabric Samples Recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery

Burial Feature	Colour	Distinguishing features	Fiber type	Weave	Provenience
8	Light Brown	n/a	Silk	Plain 2/2 twill	Inside nose
10	Light Brown	n/a	Leather	n/a	Coffin interior
	Dark Brown	n/a	Wool	Unidentified	Floor of coffin
11	Light Brown	n/a	Leather	n/a	Coffin interior
	Gold, green and red	n/a	Silk	Satin weave (3/1)	Tied around neck
	Red	n/a	Silk	Twill float weave (3/1)	Left ribs
	Dark brown	Button hole	Wool	Balanced plain weave (2/2)	Covering upper body
	Dark brown	n/a	Wool	Plain 2/2 twill	Covering lower body
	Dark Brown	n/a	Wool	Satin weave (4/1)	Under ornamental tacks layered with white cotton
12	Light Brown	n/a	Leather	n/a	Within grave contents
14	Light Brown	n/a	Tanned hide	n/a	Enveloped upper and lower body
	Dark Brown	n/a	Wool	Balanced plain weave	Unknown
15	Dark Brown	n/a	Wool	Unwoven	Under ornamental tack
17	Dark Brown	n/a	Wool	Balanced plain weave (1/1)	Unknown
	Dark Brown	Held within snap-closure buttons	Wool	Plain 2/2 twill	Pelvic area
	Dark Brown	n/a	Wool	Unbalanced plain weave (1/1)	Unknown
19	Dark Brown	n/a	Wool	Plain 2/2 twill	Coffin exterior
20	Dark Brown	n/a	Wool	Unidentified	Coffin interior
24	Light Brown	n/a	Silk	Alternating float weave (2/2 with 1/1 interlacing)	Enveloped feet
	Dark brown	n/a	Wool	Cable knit	Unknown
Surface Scatter	Black	n/a	Wool	Plain 2/2 twill	Unknown
	Tan and Dark Brown	Plaid, Stuck to NWMP button	Wool	Uneven 2/1 twill	Unknown

6.8 Summary

Overall, the artifact assemblage described in the preceding chapter was typical of a late 19th-century Roman Catholic Cemetery. The discovery of a rosary and numerous devotional medals at the St. Vital Cemetery allowed for the early confirmation of the burial ground's religious affiliation. Furthermore, the placement of artifacts within the coffins unearthed at the cemetery demonstrated the dual function of particular artifacts as grave offerings. In this sense, the artifact assemblage collected from the St. Vital Cemetery allowed a glimpse of 19th-century Christian mortuary practices (see Chapter Seven).

CHAPTER SEVEN

Mortuary Practices Demonstrated at the St. Vital Cemetery

7.1 Introduction

The one universal commonality shared by all cultural and religious groups is the ritual surrounding death. However, as with other rituals mortuary treatment greatly differs from one culture to the next. At times, such mortuary practices vary so greatly that “what is sacred to one culture is exactly what is most offensive to another” (Taylor 2000: 45).

The following chapter serves to demonstrate that the mortuary practices observed at the St. Vital Cemetery were consistent (for the most part) with those practiced by congregations of the Christian faith. General statements concerning mortuary practices are based on both the artifact assemblage and observations recorded in the field. Characteristics of individual burial features that were not explained by Christian burial practices were attributed to the effects of ancestry. In these cases, the influence of cultural traditions was explored. Extreme cases of differential burial practices demonstrated at the St. Vital Cemetery are discussed separately. A brief comparison of the burial assemblage to that observed at the Battleford Industrial School excavation follows.

A number of steps comprise the Christian mortuary “process”, beginning with the death of a parish member and ending with the interment of the body. Although a

number of these steps are visible archaeologically, funerary hymns, prayers, and the continuing anguish of grieving family members are not captured in the burial features exhumed from a cemetery. Those elements of the funerary process that were visible at the St. Vital Cemetery will be addressed throughout the following chapter in a stepwise fashion.

7.2 Preparation of the Body

Members of the St. Vital Parish were likely involved in the preparation of the deceased in late 19th-century Battleford, since a funeral home was not yet present in the small community. This task was either bestowed on a family member or a specific individual was appointed by the local parish priest for this purpose (Father Mann, personal communication 2003). Preparation of the body for burial likely took place in the homes of these parishioners.

Battleford resident James Ballendine (son of Peter Ballendine) recalled an incident where a deceased child was brought into his parent's house in Battleford to be prepared for burial. The son of Samuel Ballendine, farming instructor on the nearby Poundmaker Reserve, had died on February 27th, 1885 (Saskatchewan Herald, 6 March 1885). James Ballendine stated that "The body of the child was brought into our house. I was there present. I did not attend the funeral but my mother did" (NAC, RG-15, Interior series, DII-8-c, vol. 1334, reel C-14946, Claim of Samuel Ballendine, sole heir of dead son James). It was his mother, Caroline Rowland (wife of Peter Ballendine), who prepared the body for the funeral in this case. According to records of the St. Vital Parish, Father Bigoness laid the child to rest the following day in the presence of Peter Ballendine and Caroline Rowland, likely within the confines of the St. Vital Cemetery

(PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). Whether Caroline Ballendine consistently prepared the deceased of the St. Vital Parish for burial is unknown, although her participation in parish activities further demonstrates the link between the Ballendine family and the St. Vital Parish.

7.2.1 Burial Clothing

Preparation of the deceased for burial generally involved washing and dressing the body in the appropriate burial garments. Traditionally, children that died soon after their baptism were interred in their baptismal garments (Iserson 1994: 451). In general, Christians were either clothed in simple garments or a burial shroud, which consisted of a sheet of fabric that was either sewn or fastened with pins to envelop the body of the deceased. Often, the head-end of shrouds “were made with holes at the top to fit over the head because it was thought that on resurrection day these holes would make it easier for the newly arisen to emerge” (Taylor 2000: 331). Shrouds were commonly fabricated of linen or wool and were especially used in the interment of the poor.

Archaeologically, the presence of a shroud can be inferred through the recovery of pins and remnant fabric, or through the complete absence of artifacts indicative of burial clothing, such as buttons, clasps, or belt buckles. A number of such instances were encountered at the St. Vital Cemetery, where the lack of such artifacts was observed in a number of cases. For instance, the only indication of burial clothing within the contents of burial feature 7 was the scarce remains of preserved fabric. Buttons and other fasteners were absent from the coffin’s contents. It is unknown whether the individual in question was wrapped in a shroud or was wearing a simple dress that did not make use of fasteners in its design. Interestingly, at the nearby Industrial School Cemetery,

excavation of individual burial features dating to the late 19th-century revealed that a number of the deceased were simply wrapped in layers of fabric for burial (Anderson et al 1974). Perhaps this was also the case for many individuals interred at the St. Vital Cemetery. However, caution is warranted in making such interpretations as the contents of all coffins were not consistently screened. It remains possible that small clasps used to fasten garments, such as hooks and eyes, were simply overlooked.

Overall, garments employed for the burial of the deceased at the St. Vital Cemetery appeared to be rather simple in design in compliance with the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. Most individuals seemed to be dressed in simple garments made of leather, cotton, or wool. Preserved fabric collected from individual burial features were indicative of the utilitarian function of the clothing used for burial. For instance, the individuals associated with burial features 15, 17, and 24 were clad in what appeared to be a simple shirt, overalls, and a woolen jacket.

Since early parishioners of the St. Vital Parish were mostly of First Nations or Métis ancestry, it was not surprising to see elements of their cultural traditions in the attire of the St. Vital burial population. At times, clothing style acts as “ethnic ‘markers’ which from their origins through to their contemporary use are expressions of continuity and persistence” (Racette 2001: 181). For instance, the presence of a number of ball buttons and a large mass of beads found within the coffin of burial feature 10 suggested that the woman was wearing leggings upon interment. Leggings were a traditional garment of the Métis and First Nations peoples that were worn by both men and women (Koch 1977). According to Troupe (2002: 9), “the basic dress for Métis women was long skirts, colourful long sleeved blouses with a pleated bodice and puffed sleeves, a

blanket or shawl, leggings and moccasins". Such leggings were made from various materials including leather or wool and were extensively decorated with beads.

In one instance, the garments worn for burial may have allowed for individual identification. Unlike any other individual interred at the St. Vital Cemetery, the feet and lower legs of the individual associated with burial feature 24 were wrapped in silk. In 1883, the local newspaper recounted the story of Francois Gonot who, while leading a group to Poundmaker reserve, walked ahead of the group and became lost. Upon his return to Battleford, Gonot was treated for severe frostbite of the feet and lower legs, for which those responsible for his treatment hoped not to have to amputate (Saskatchewan Herald, 17 February 1883). In this case, it is possible that raw silk was used as a bandage to wrap Gonot's frostbitten legs and feet. Unable to fully recover, Francois Gonot later died on February 22nd, 1883.

The unfortunate man, Francois Gonot, whose terrible sufferings while lost on the plains we referred to in our last issue, yielded to the effects of exposure and died on the evening of Thursday 22nd of February. Up to a short time before his death he seemed to be in a fair way of recovery, the frozen members bidding fair to get well; but congestion of the lungs set in, and his system having much been reduced through the sufferings he endured, he sank rapidly and died as stated above. The funeral took place on Monday (Saskatchewan Herald, 3 March 1883).

Francois Gonot was laid to rest by Father Bigoness of the St. Vital Parish on February 26th, 1883. The burial presumably took place in the St. Vital Cemetery.

Circumstantial evidence suggested that the remains associated with burial feature 24 were perhaps those of the late Francois Gonot. Firstly, Francois Gonot was approximately 30 years of age at the time of his death according to the records of St. Vital Parish, (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). Comparatively, the individual associated

with burial feature 24 was a male between the ages of 30 and 34 years at the time of his death. An abundance of religious medallions were recovered from the coffin, which was not surprising if this was in fact the burial of Francois Gonot, as he was said to be a religious man devoted to missionary work (The Canadian Northwest Historical Society 1927: 4: 24). The evidence presented in this case was merely circumstantial. Therefore, it was not possible to confirm the identity of the aforementioned individual. To further complicate matters, the name of Francois Gonot was etched on a memorial plaque, which was placed at the NWMP Cemetery in Battleford and entitled "In memoriam of Battleford residents who lie in unmarked graves". Whether the remains of Francois Gonot lie in an unmarked grave specifically within the NWMP Cemetery or in the St. Vital Cemetery is not known.

7.2.2 Cultural Materials and Evidence of Grave Offerings

The advocacy for simplicity in Christian burial garments was also reflected in the scarcity of grave offerings at the St. Vital Cemetery. In this sense, a grave offering was defined as an artifact, which was placed in the coffin or grave as an offering to the deceased. First Nations populations commonly interred the deceased with grave offerings to accompany the dead into the afterlife. Christian populations failed to comprehend the necessity for such a practice as these items were bound to decay along with the body (Axtell 1981: 115). The majority of cultural items retrieved from the burial features at the St. Vital Cemetery were interpreted as the remains of burial clothing or items worn by the individuals in life such as jewelry. Other artifacts were thought to be held within the pockets of the deceased prior to interment, as observed in the case of the comb, pipe, and pocket knife present in burial feature 11. These items

were viewed as being part of the burial preparation and did not function as prototypical grave offerings.

Classification of artifacts as either grave offerings or part of the burial garments was not always a straightforward task. In this sense, it was uncertain whether devotional medals served as personal belongings of the deceased or as traditional grave offerings. These religious artifacts seemed to possess dual functional roles, whereby they acted both as ritual items and grave offerings. Devotional medals of various styles were recovered from the contents of the coffins associated with burial features 11, 18, 20, and 24. The individual associated with burial feature 20 was the only infant to be interred with a devotional medal. In this case, perhaps the individual associated with burial feature 20 received the aforementioned medallion as a baptismal gift.

It was not surprising to find religious medallions in a burial context given their special significance especially within the context of a Roman Catholic cemetery. Although it was possible that these items were worn solely for purposes of adornment or were placed around the necks of the deceased by grieving family members, the context of their discovery was believed to be demonstrative of their spiritual significance.

Cultural items obviously not included as part of the burial attire were treated as offerings to the dead. Grave offerings possessing religious significance were recovered from the contents of burial features 18 and 26. Within the contents of burial feature 18 were the remnants of a rosary, the only artifact of its kind retrieved from the cemetery excavation. The rosary was likely clasped between the hands of the deceased upon interment. The presence of the rosary was not unexpected, as it was not uncommon for rosaries to be woven between the fingers of the deceased in Roman Catholic burials (Father Gaudet, personal communication 2001). The rosary perhaps was placed with the

body prior to sealing the coffin at the request of the family. However, it is difficult to make any conclusions as to the ownership of the rosary. In life, for example, the rosary may have belonged to the deceased. On the other hand, the rosary may have been a gift given to the deceased by a grieving family member prior to interment. Whether this rosary was used for its intended purpose in life or simply worn around the neck as a pendant is also not certain. The context of its discovery, however, suggests that the rosary held a special significance to the individual associated with burial feature 18 or to those who prepared the body for burial.

Within the contents of the small coffin associated with burial feature 26 were the fragments of a small bottle alongside the remains of a 2 month old infant. The possibility exists that the small bottle once contained either perfume or holy water, although traces of these substances were not retrieved from the remains of the artifact. If so, the small bottle and the substance contained within may have played a role in the baptismal ceremony of the young individual.

Burial feature 14 presented a different situation altogether as the grave offerings housed within the coffin were not religious in nature. Cultural materials identified as grave goods included two strands of hair enveloped in brass beads and coils, a pipe, tobacco, and a small handmade picture frame constructed of wood. These materials were labeled as grave offerings not due to their type, but rather as a result of their placement within the coffin (Figure 7.1).

According to Bell (1994: 28), placement of artifacts in a specific location within the coffin may act as an indicator of cultural and/or religious practices. In this case, all aforementioned items were neatly placed together above the head of the individual in what appeared to be a bundle.



Figure 7.1 Possible medicine bundle associated with burial feature 14. Bundle is located superior to the cranium of the individual (note cranial vault on the left). Photograph courtesy of the Heritage Branch of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Saskatchewan.

The inclusion of a bundle within the contents of burial feature 14 may be indicative of the population affinity of this individual. Hunters belonging to various First Nations groups such as the Assiniboine, carried with them a medicine bundle to give them luck in the hunt (Denig 2000; Jenness 1963). These bundles, often containing an item (or items) valued by the owner, were wrapped in skins, placed in a sack of rawhide, and were referred to as his ‘medicine’. Items commonly included in Assiniboine medicine bundles included wooden images, animal skins, beads, locks of hair from a deceased relative, and tobacco (Denig 2000: 495-498). Ordinarily, the medicine bundle was hidden from sight, “unless the Indian falls sick, when he has it taken out and placed at his head” (Denig 2000: 495). Upon death, the medicine bundle was commonly interred with the hunter (Denig 2000: 498).

The aforementioned contents of an Assiniboine medicine bundle were very similar to those placed within burial feature 14. In this case, it was likely that the bundle

belonged to the deceased. The presence of the possible bundle suggested that the individual was perhaps of First Nations descent. Accordingly, the most prominent First Nations groups in the Battleford area consisted of the Cree, Saulteaux, and Assiniboiné in the late 19th-century (Light 1987). Since it remains impossible to confirm such a statement, the proposed population affinity of this individual was purely speculative.

7.3 Placement in the Coffin

Once the body of the deceased was cleansed and clothed in the appropriate burial garments, the individual was placed in a coffin. Coffins were typically used “to protect the corpse from scavengers, to protect it from the elements (at least initially), and to keep the dead from the sight of the living” (Taylor 2000: 46). In the Catholic Faith, no specific rules existed stating that a coffin was required for interment, although on many occasions, the cost of the coffin was covered by the parish of which the deceased was a member (Habenstein and Lamers 1955: 76, 62).

In general, the funerary industry did not flourish in America until the latter part of the 19th-century (Habenstein and Lamers 1955: 225). Prior to its commencement, coffin construction was the responsibility of local carpenters and cabinetmakers (Habenstein and Lamers 1955: 171). These coffins were often constructed of pine, especially if the deceased was a member of the lower class (Habenstein and Lamers 1955: 236). In many instances, coffins were often constructed on a moment’s notice upon the death of a member of the community (Coffin 1976: 99). Over time, funeral parlors opened and professional funeral directors took over the task of preparing the deceased for burial and standardized sizes of coffins emerged.

In this particular case, coffins were likely constructed by a local carpenter due to the absence of the funerary industry in early Battleford. In 1883, Battleford resident Louis Flamand constructed a coffin for a young girl by the name of Amelia Ballendine upon her death on the Poundmaker reserve (NAC, RG-15, Interior series, DII-8-c, vol.1334, reel C-14946, Claim of Mary Ballendine as sole heir to Amelia). At the time, Louis Flamand, a parishioner of the St. Vital Parish, was residing on the Poundmaker Reserve while constructing a chapel. Interestingly, the name of Louis Flamand frequently appeared on the pages of the St. Vital Parish Register. Flamand often acted as the godfather for baptized parishioners and was an attendee at a number of funerals performed by priests of the St. Vital Parish (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). Whether Louis Flamand was responsible for the construction of all coffins requested by the parish of St. Vital is unknown. In the late 19th-century, students who died while attending the nearby Battleford Industrial School were buried in coffins that were constructed by their classmates (Wasylow 1972: 209). It is entirely possible that the students from the Industrial School also constructed coffins for local organizations such as the St. Vital Parish.

Intact coffins uncovered at the St. Vital Cemetery were one of two general styles. In total, twelve coffins were hexagonal in shape while another nine were rectangular (Table 7.1). Two coffins were too disturbed to tell their original shape. In general, coffin construction underwent a period of stylistic change in the 19th-century. In the early 19th-century for instance, the most popular style of coffin in North America was hexagonal in shape (Figure 7.2), with its widest point located near the shoulders of the deceased (Taylor 2000: 69).



Figure 7.2 Burial feature 7. Note the general hexagonal shape of the coffin. Photograph courtesy of the Heritage Resource Branch of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Saskatchewan.

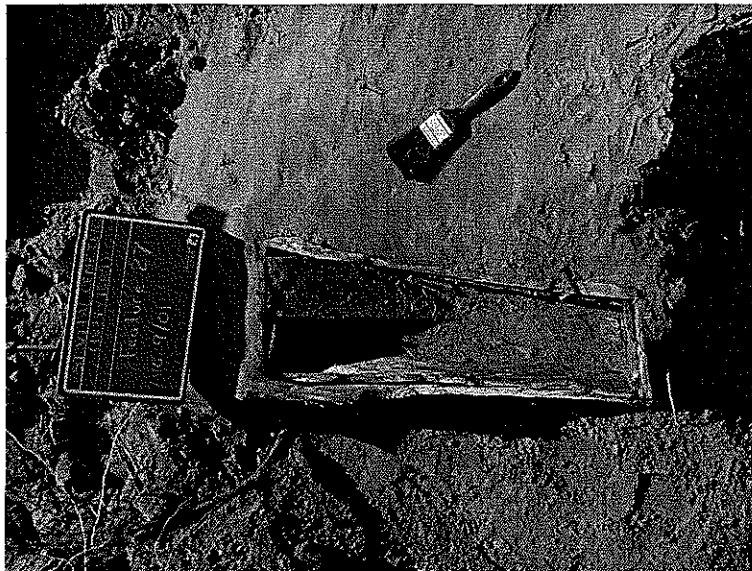


Figure 7.3 Burial feature 27. Note the general rectangular shape of the coffin. Photograph courtesy of the Heritage Resource Branch of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Saskatchewan.

Gradually, the popularity of hexagonal coffins declined with the introduction of rectangular coffins (Figure 7.3) around 1850 (Blakely and Beck 1982: 188). The

previously popular hexagonal coffin became obsolete towards the end of the 19th-century (Kogon and Mayer 1995).

Table 7.1 Variation in Coffin Construction Observed at the St. Vital Cemetery (n=23)

<i>Burial Feature</i>	<i>Coffin Style</i>	<i>Coffin Decoration</i>
4	Disturbed	Composite tacks
5(A)	Rectangular	Composite tacks
5(C)	Rectangular	Composite tacks
7	Tapered	----
8	Rectangular	----
10	Tapered	----
11	Rectangular	Brass tacks
14	Tapered	----
15	Tapered	Brass tacks
16	Rectangular	----
17	Tapered	----
18	Tapered	Brass tacks
19	Tapered	----
20	Tapered	----
21	Disturbed	----
22	Rectangular	Composite tacks
23	Tapered	----
24	Tapered	----
26	Tapered	----
27	Rectangular	----
28	Rectangular	----
29	Rectangular	----
30	Tapered	----

The mixed nature of the coffin styles observed at the St. Vital Cemetery is expected of cemeteries dating to the latter half of the 19th-century, as this represented the period of transition from the hexagonal to the rectangular shaped coffin (1850-1900).

Although the changing style of coffins used for burial of St. Vital parishioners followed

the general North American trend seen at the end of the 19th-century, subtle differences in construction and decoration were noted.

Correlation between coffin shape and coffin decoration was not demonstrated (Table 7.1). Furthermore, variation in coffin style did not appear to be affected by the age or sex of the deceased. Burial feature 17 served as an example of differential coffin construction at the St. Vital Cemetery. The coffin of burial feature 17 was different from all others due to the presence of an outer wooden box surrounding the coffin and decorative cut-marks on the coffin itself. According to Father Gaudet (personal communication 2001), the use of a crude outer box was essential to help prevent the inevitable collapse of the coffin upon interment under the pressure of the surrounding soil. On the other hand, perhaps this individual was once interred in another location and was later moved to the St. Vital Cemetery (see Chapter Eight for implications). The coffin associated with burial feature 28 also varied from the norm, in which case planks of wood were placed perpendicular to the remainder of the wood used in the construction of the coffin. Despite the variation in coffin construction, it was evident that white spruce was the wood of choice for this purpose. In all cases where wood samples were identifiable, *Picea glauca* (white spruce) was used for coffin construction. The predominance of white spruce is not surprising due to its local availability, especially in areas just north of the Battlefords (Antoine Beriault, personal communication 2003).

Further variation was also noted in burial features 14 and 17, where wood shavings were used as a lining for the coffin. Perhaps these individuals were laid to rest in a coffin lined with wood chips due to the preference of the family, in hopes to give their loved ones a soft bed on which to rest (Parrington and Roberts 1990: 154).

Alternatively, the presence of wood shavings may be explained by superstitious beliefs held by the carpenter himself.

Traditionally, old-time carpenters brushed together all of the sawdust and shavings accumulated from making a coffin and placed these scraps inside it. Superstition taught that if these bits of leftover wood were tracked into a house or carelessly shaken from clothing, they would endanger whomever they touched, and that person would be death's next victim (Coffin 1976: 102-103).

In general, variability in coffin construction over time suggested that this responsibility was not simply bestowed on a single member of the community.

Decoration of coffins with inexpensive brass and composite tacks was not consistent throughout the burial assemblage (decorated, $n=7$). Evidence of fabric covered coffins was visible on those coffins decorated with tacks. The exterior of the coffin associated with burial feature 11 was covered in two layers of fabric, including an inner layer of white cotton and an outermost layer of dark brown wool (see Chapter Six). In most instances where intact coffins were adorned with tacks, the tacks were arranged along the circumference of the coffin ($n=5$). Burial feature 22 presented a unique form of decoration, as composite tacks were arranged in the shape of a cross on the lid of the coffin towards the cranial end. Two possibilities exist to account for differential coffin decoration. Either the same individual constructed all decorated/fabric-covered coffins or coffin decoration was decided by individual families of the deceased.

Despite the decoration of coffins with ornamental tacks observed at the St. Vital Cemetery, evidence of coffin-specific hardware was completely absent. Conversely, specially-made ornamental coffin hardware was recovered from excavations of various 19th-century cemeteries in Ontario (Woodley 1991 and 1992). These included items such as brass name plates, glass viewing windows, ornate coffin handles, and numerous types of decorative coffin tacks. Despite their lavish appearance, these items were rather

inexpensive. The lack of such coffin hardware at the St. Vital Cemetery may speak to the economic situation of the parishioners. On the other hand, it is possible that the infiltration of the funerary industry into Western Canada occurred after its arrival in the eastern portions of the country. In this case, perhaps coffin-specific hardware was not yet available to the residents of Battleford in the late 19th-century.

7.3.1 Body Position within the Coffin

An extended burial position was typically associated with Christian burial practices, since lying on one's back allowed the eyes to gaze towards the heavens (Axtell 1981: 123).



Figure 7.4 Burial feature 17. Note the position of the hands in the form of a cross. Photograph courtesy of the Heritage Branch of the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Government of Saskatchewan.

The placement of the hands crossed on the pelvis was also a Christian practice, which was meant to symbolize the cross if a cross itself was not available to be included with the deceased (Habenstein and Lamers 1955: 61). It was also plausible that the positioning of the hands in such a manner symbolized that the deceased was “at rest” according to Father Leo Mann, OMI (Father Mann, personal communication 2003).

Table 7.2 Burial Position of the Deceased Observed at the St. Vital Cemetery (n=24)

<i>Burial Feature</i>	<i>Position of the Body</i>	<i>Position of the Hands</i>
2	Semi-flexed (left side)	----
4	----	----
5A	----	----
7	Extended	Crossed
8	Extended	----
10	Extended	Crossed
11	Extended	Crossed
12	Semi-flexed (supine)	At sides
13	Semi-flexed (right side)	Not recorded
14	Extended	At sides
15	Extended	Crossed
17	Extended	Crossed
18	Extended	Crossed
19	Extended	Crossed
20	Extended	----
21	----	----
22	Extended	----
23	Extended	Crossed
24	Extended	Crossed
26	----	----
27	n/r	n/r
28	Extended	Crossed
29	Extended	----
30	Extended	n/r

Dashed lines denote where disturbances were too great to make any conclusions regarding body or hand position. The notation "n/r" was used for instances where burial position was not recorded.

Most individuals interred at the St. Vital Cemetery were buried in an extended supine position (n=16), while three individuals were interred in a semi-flexed position. The hands of a number of individuals were found crossed on the pelvis (n=10) in those cases where it was possible to make such observations (Figure 7.4).

The variability observed in the placement of the hands for burial may be attributed to the lack of consistency with regard to those individuals responsible for burial preparation. Perhaps certain individuals preferred to bury the dead in the traditional manner, while others were ambivalent. Alternatively, transportation of the deceased between various venues perhaps caused the hands to drop to the sides of the body. Once preparation of the body was complete and the remains of the deceased were placed in the coffin, parishioners attending the funeral formed a procession and traveled to the St. Vital Parish for the funerary service. With the completion of the funerary mass, the coffin was then transported to the cemetery. Transportation of the coffin was likely accomplished through the use of a Red River Cart, a common (and bumpy) form of transportation used in late 19th-century Battleford. Perhaps transport of the coffin from the home, to the church, and later to the gravesite caused the remains of the deceased to shift, thereby allowing the hands of various individuals to drop to the sides of the body.

7.4 Burial in the Cemetery

After the funeral service, parishioners proceeded to the gravesite where a brief ceremony was held prior to interment. With the completion of the graveside ceremony, the coffin of the deceased was lowered into the awaiting grave by ropes or by handles if they were present (Father Mann, personal communication 2003). During times where money was scarce, coffin handles were often recycled. In this case, handles were removed prior to filling the grave and were reused as the hardware for the next coffin waiting to be constructed (Father Gaudet, personal communication 2001). The lack of coffin handles at the St. Vital Cemetery may speak to the dire financial situation of the St. Vital parishioners.

The Roman Catholic Church and other religious organizations of the Christian faith commonly practiced inhumation of the body after death, which typically took place within a few days after death (Father Mann, personal communication 2003). The burial of the deceased was specifically performed to imitate the burial treatment of Christ himself (Murphy 2003: 3: 222). Bodies of the deceased were interred in consecrated ground in order to await resurrection of the body upon Christ's Second Coming (Habenstein and Lamers 1955: 61). In the case of unbaptized children, they were to be buried in a separate section of the cemetery (Father Mann, personal communication 2002).

With the exception of the disturbed surface scatter, the form of disposal demonstrated at the St. Vital Cemetery was that of primary inhumation. Therefore, it appeared as though families treated the remains of their deceased relatives in compliance with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. The time of interment relative to the time of death was brief, whereby a number of the deceased were laid to rest within a day of their death. At times, merely a few hours passed between the death and burial of a St. Vital parishioner (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.).

The burials of children at the St. Vital Cemetery were not located in a separate area of the cemetery, but were interspersed among the graves of adult members of the congregation, perhaps suggesting that these infants had been baptized. Upon examination of the St. Vital Parish Register, two instances were noted where both a mother and child had died within weeks of each other (PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). The possibility was briefly considered that the remains of these infants were buried

alongside the remains of their mother. Examination of demographic data (age, sex, and population affinity) for those infant burials placed adjacent to those of adult females proved to be inconclusive.

7.4.1 Orientation

Traditional Christian burial practices dictated that the body was to be oriented on an east/west axis, which may have originated from ancient Egyptian burial practices where the dead were buried on the west side of the Nile, “where the sun died” (Iserson 1994: 505). Eventually, an east/west burial orientation gained a spiritual connotation in Christian mortuary practices, in which case

the feet face Jerusalem, the direction of the second coming from which Gabriel’s horn will sound. The dead must lie with their feet to the east so that they may face Christ when they rise from their graves on Judgement day (Brock and Schwartz 1991: 87).

The burial features uncovered at the St. Vital Cemetery were predominantly situated on a northeast/ southwest axis (n=18). For those individuals buried on a northeast/southwest axis, the orientation of the cranium varied as the crania of some individuals were oriented towards the southwest (n=10), while others faced towards the northeast (n=6). In some instances, the cranial end of the coffin was not recorded (n=2). Another two burial features were interred in a completely different orientation compared to the rest of the burial population. One individual was oriented on a north/south axis (cranium facing south, n=1), while a single individual was interred in a northwest/southeast orientation (cranium facing northwest, n=1).

Table 7.3 Orientation of Burial Features at the St. Vital Cemetery (n=26).

<i>Burial Feature</i>	<i>Burial Orientation</i>	<i>Cranial Orientation</i>
2	---	---
4	---	---
5(A)	NE/SW to N/S	---
5(C)	NE/SW to N/S	---
7	NE/SW	NE
8	NE/SW	SW
10	NE/SW	SW
11	NW/SE	NW
12	NE/SW	NE
13	---	---
14	NE/SW	NE
15	NE/SW	SW
16	NE/SW	---
17	NE/SW	SW
18	NE/SW	SW
19	N/S	S
20	NE/SW	NE
21	NE/SW	---
22	NE/SW	NE
23	NE/SW to N/S	NE/N
24	NE/SW	SW
26	NE/SW	SW
27	NE/SW	SW
28	NE/SW	SW
29	NE/SW	NE
30	NE/SW	SW

Dashed lines represent instances where disturbances failed to allow the appropriate information to be documented.

Overall, individuals interred in the St. Vital Cemetery were not subjected to the traditional east/west orientation of a Christian burial (see Figure 5.3). The seemingly strict east/west burial orientation described, according to Father Leo Mann, has become

a theoretical statement over time rather than a practice that is enforced by the Catholic Church (Father Mann, personal communication 2003). Perhaps in this case, the graves were simply oriented according to the lay of the land available for use as a cemetery. Still, this failed to account for the disorganization observed with regard to burial orientation.

Burial features within the St. Vital Cemetery did not seem to be interred in strictly organized rows, although it seemed like the attempt was made. As with the preparation of the body, it was unlikely that a single individual was responsible for all interments at the St. Vital Cemetery. This in itself may have been sufficient to cause the poor organization demonstrated upon excavation of the site. It is possible that the attempt was made to inter the deceased in a traditional Christian orientation. However, without proper instrumentation to determine the four cardinal directions, this would have been a difficult task to accomplish as demonstrated by the haphazard layout of the cemetery.

Additionally, gravemarkers were not visible upon excavation of the St. Vital Cemetery. It is yet unknown whether they were ever erected to commemorate the dead buried in the small Roman Catholic cemetery. These markers, if present, were likely in the shape of a cross and constructed of wood, as demonstrated by the grave of Thomas Quinn, victim of the Frog Lake Massacre in 1885 (Figure 7.5).

Even if gravemarkers were used, the prevalence of surrounding prairie fires likely threatened their long-term existence, as historical documentation stressed the frequency of prairie fires in the Battleford area. It is possible that the lack of organization at the St. Vital Cemetery was due to the lack of gravemarkers.

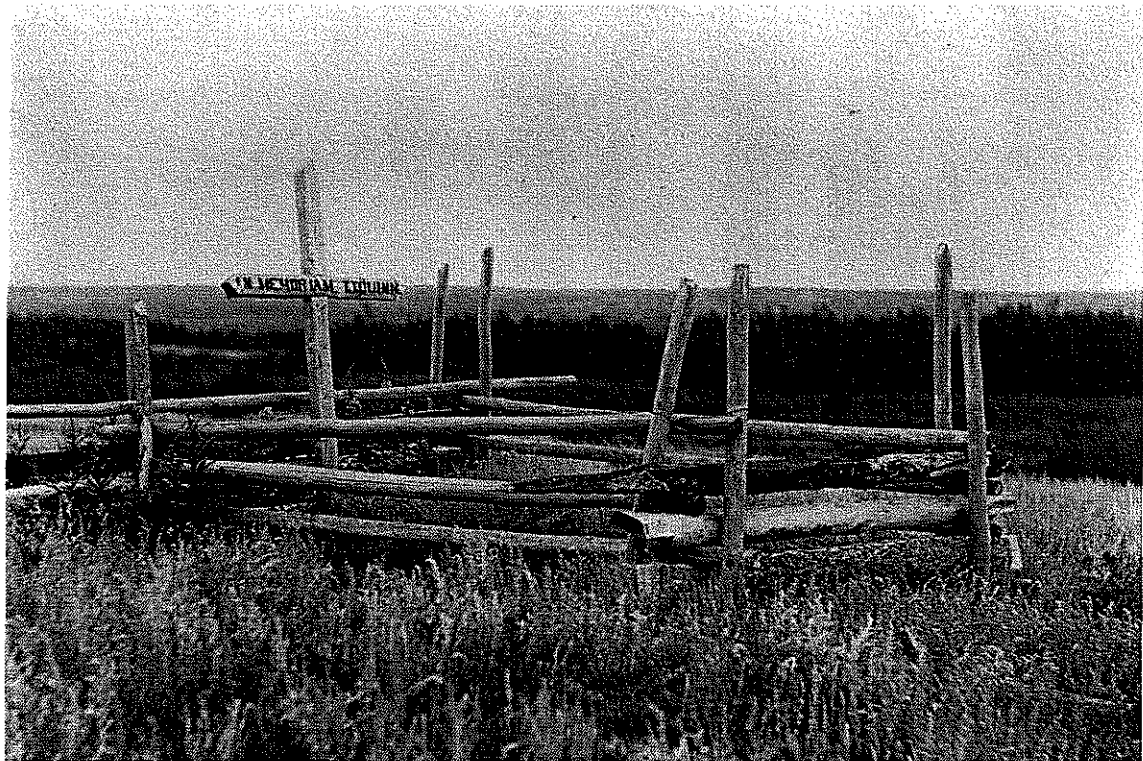


Figure 7.5 Grave of Thomas Quinn, victim of the Frog Lake Massacre in 1885. Photograph courtesy of the Glenbow Archives NA-1036-6.

To further complicate matters, it seemed that the St. Vital Cemetery was not divided into individual burial plots in the manner that the Roman Catholic section of the Town Cemetery was later organized. Interestingly, the Roman Catholic plots in the Town Cemetery were oriented on an east/west axis, the traditional Christian practice. Recall that gravestones were also present in this cemetery as compared to the lack thereof in the earlier cemetery of St. Vital.

Overall, the combination of various factors likely led to the inconsistencies observed with regard to burial orientation and lack of organization as demonstrated at the St. Vital Cemetery.

7.5 Evidence of Differential Mortuary Treatment at the St. Vital Cemetery

Since the mortuary treatment of burial features 2, 12, and 13 differed greatly from the norm, a discussion of these individual burial features will be treated separately from the rest of the St. Vital Cemetery population. Mortuary variability may have occurred for a variety of reasons, including straightforward factors such as cultural practices and personal choice. Differential burial treatment may be used to signify the status of the deceased individual or the manner by which the individual met his demise. For example, Catholics that died by their own hand were usually refused the rites of Christian burial. These individuals were often buried outside the confines of the Roman Catholic cemetery (Millar 1997: 62). Differential burial treatment may demonstrate the perception of the deceased by other members of the community.

7.5.1 Burial Feature 13

Burial feature 13 was somewhat of an anomaly as compared to the remainder of the burial population. The individual was placed on the right side in a semi-flexed position, and a coffin was not employed as part of the interment. For clarification, the term “semi-flexed” was used to describe a position where the knees are partly drawn up towards the chest at an angle greater than 90 degrees (Sprague 1968: 481).

The semi-flexed burial position demonstrated by the remains associated with burial feature 13 was commonly associated with First Nations populations. Burial in this position enabled the deceased to face the direction in which the soul was thought to travel upon their death (Axtell 1981: 123). The specific orientation employed varied depending on the First Nations group represented.

According to documentary sources, the area surrounding the legislative buildings and the nearby St. Vital Cemetery was used as a favorite camping place of the Cree prior

to its occupation as a permanent settlement in 1874 (McPherson 1967: 35). Interestingly, the Cree traditionally buried their dead in a shallow grave lined with robes despite the overwhelming popularity of scaffold and tree burials practiced by other First Nations groups on the Northern Plains (Lux 2001: 78; Mandelbaum 1979: 339). Tree burials were used by the Cree as a last resort in the winter when the ground was less amenable to digging a burial pit (Lux 2001: 78).

Given the traditional burial style used in the interment of this individual, it was possible that burial feature 13 was not at all affiliated with the cemetery of the St. Vital Parish. Perhaps this individual was interred in this location prior to its use as a Roman Catholic Cemetery in the late 19th-century. It is not possible to confirm such a proposition, as coffins and an extended burial position were not necessarily critical aspects of Christian burial. The position of the individual in this case may simply reflect the population affinity or the preference of living family members of the deceased.

7.5.2 Burial Feature 12

Like burial feature 13, the burial position of feature 12 was unique with respect to the rest of the St. Vital burial population. The skeletal remains associated with burial feature 12 were interred in a supine, semi-flexed position. A coffin was not visible upon excavation of this burial feature. Due to the precarious position of the body, it is unlikely that the absence of a coffin was due to lack of preservation as the body would not have fit in a coffin in this position. A straightforward explanation for the individual's burial position is based on the preference of living family members of the deceased. Perhaps the family of the individual wanted their loved one buried in such a fashion. However, alternative theories have been considered as a potential explanation of differential mortuary treatment in this case.

Interestingly, the individual associated with burial feature 12 suffered from a congenital disorder termed aural atresia, whereby the external auditory canal was malformed (Swanston 2003). Severe cases of aural atresia may cause the malformation of external portions of the ear and neurological impingement that was perhaps externally visible to members of the community. It is possible that the individual associated with burial feature 12 was subjected to differential burial treatment due to the congenital deformity from which he suffered. Similar conclusions have been reached in other instances, whereby the individual subjected to differential mortuary treatment suffered from congenital disorders and their associated social stigma (Spence 1998).

The close proximity of the St. Vital Cemetery to the Battleford-Swift Current trail offers an alternative explanation to the differential mortuary treatment of burial feature 12. Numerous individuals frequented the trail located on the south side of the Battle River for various reasons, such as for the transport of freight and for travel to surrounding reserves of the Cree and Assiniboine peoples. It is possible that the human remains of burial feature 12 were simply dropped off and quickly buried in the St. Vital Cemetery by a group of individuals traveling through town.

Overall, documentary support regarding the specific factors affecting the burial treatment of this individual was not recovered. Therefore, a straightforward explanation remains to be presented in this case.

7.5.3 Burial Feature 2

The mortuary treatment of burial feature 2 was unlike any other documented at the St. Vital Cemetery. The newborn was not placed in a coffin for burial like the majority of the burial population. Lack of preservation did not appear to account for the absence of a coffin. The individual was placed on the left side of the body in a semi-

flexed position, reminiscent of mortuary practices more typical of First Nations populations.

It was possible that the individual associated with burial feature 2 was buried in a bag of moss. Initially upon excavation, it was proposed that the individual had been buried in a leather bag. The material did not resemble leather upon close inspection and the material quickly disintegrated after removal from the burial environment.

A tradition of the Cree involved placing newborns in moss bags shortly after their birth, which was formed “by folding an oblong piece of hide or cloth lengthwise and sewing one end” (Mandelbaum 1979: 139-140). The moss within the bag was changed whenever deemed necessary. In this case, it was possible that the individual associated with burial feature 2 was interred in a bag fabricated of moss and cloth for the purposes of interment, especially considering the extremely young age of the individual.

Family preference may have accounted for the differential mortuary treatment of the individual associated with burial feature 2, or this individual was interred in this location prior to its use as a Roman Catholic cemetery and therefore has no relation to the St. Vital Cemetery whatsoever.

7.6 Comparison to the Battleford Industrial School Cemetery (1884-1913)

Excavations of the nearby Battleford Industrial School Cemetery in 1974 demonstrated similar patterns of mortuary practices as those observed at the excavation of the St. Vital Cemetery in the summer of 2001. Unfortunately, a comprehensive report regarding the findings of the cemetery excavation was not available. As a result, field notes concerning the individual burial features were consulted for comparative purposes (Anderson et al 1974).

Preservation of burial garments, coffins, and grave goods was superb at the Industrial School Cemetery, likely due to its excavation nearly thirty years prior to that of the cemetery of the St. Vital Parish. A total of 72 graves were excavated in the summer of 1974 by students from the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at the University of Saskatchewan. Of those burials where the orientation of the body was recorded (n=59), 54 were oriented on a northwest/southeast axis and interred in an extended position. A few individuals were laid in the coffin in a semi-flexed position. Recall that most individuals interred at the St. Vital Cemetery were oriented on a northeast/southwest axis, the exact opposite orientation of most individuals interred within the confines of the cemetery affiliated with the Industrial School (Anderson et al 1974). At the St. Vital Cemetery, those individuals buried in a semi-flexed position seemed to have been interred without the use of a coffin. Reasons for the discrepancy in burial orientation observed between the two Christian cemeteries are unknown. Perhaps burials were oriented according to the lay of the land used for the purposes of interment as previously suggested.

Variation in coffin shape, construction, and decoration observed at the Industrial School Cemetery was reminiscent of that observed at the St. Vital Cemetery. Firstly, the use of both hexagonal and rectangular shaped coffins was noted. In a limited number of cases, the coffin containing the remains of the deceased was placed within a crude rectangular box for burial in a similar fashion to burial feature 17 of the St. Vital Cemetery. The inner hexagonal coffin in one instance demonstrated the presence of hatch marks at the level of the shoulders. This identical pattern was also noted in the excavation of burial feature 17 at the St. Vital Cemetery. Furthermore, two coffins were constructed in a similar manner to burial feature 28 of the St. Vital Cemetery, as

perpendicular planks of wood were placed at each end of the rectangular coffins. The presence of wood shavings under the bodies of the deceased was also recorded on a number of occasions. Additionally, ornamental tacks were used on occasion for decoration of the coffin's exterior. In one specific case, tacks were positioned on the lid of the coffin in the shape of a cross, reminiscent of the decorative pattern observed on the coffin lid of burial feature 22 from the St. Vital Cemetery. Unlike the St. Vital Cemetery, a single example of coffin-specific hardware was observed at the Industrial School Cemetery, as four silver handles were recovered from a single coffin (Anderson et al 1974). Perhaps the burial of this individual in particular took place towards the end of the cemetery's use when such coffin-specific hardware was likely available. Furthermore, a small number of burials were marked by simple gravestones. The presence of gravestones at the Industrial School Cemetery was not surprising, as the cemetery was used until 1913 when such grave monuments were likely available to Battleford residents.

The field notes of the excavation crew also noted the presence of feather pillows under the head of the deceased in a number of instances. Grave offerings were present in a few instances. In one particular case, the individual was interred with a pipe in his right hand, in addition to matches, a jackknife, and a newspaper. Due to pristine preservation of fabric, a more precise interpretation of burial garments worn by individuals interred in the Industrial School Cemetery was possible. In a number of instances, men were interred wearing wool suits complete with metal snap-closure buttons, long underwear, and socks. A woman was interred wearing a dress of unidentified light brown material. She was still holding a small bunch of flowers tied with an orange ribbon. Individuals not interred in clothing were swaddled in layers of

various types of fabric, indicating that a shroud was used for burial (Anderson et al 1974). The superb preservation of clothing observed at the Battleford Industrial School Cemetery allowed for identification of the fragmentary remains of burial garments recovered from the St. Vital Cemetery (see Chapter Seven).

7.7 Summary

The cumulative burial assemblage of the St. Vital Cemetery confirmed its identity as a Roman Catholic burial ground dating to the 19th-century. As indicated by the artifact assemblage alone, grave offerings were relatively uncommon aside from those recovered from burial feature 14 and miscellaneous items of religious significance. Placement of the body within the coffins (for the most part) was consistent with practices of the Catholic Church, as the majority of the individuals interred at the St. Vital Cemetery were interred in an extended position with the hands crossed on the pelvis. The variability in coffin shape observed at the St. Vital Cemetery was typical of cemeteries dating to the late 19th-century, as was decoration of the coffins with inexpensive ornamental tacks. Comparison of the burial assemblage of the St. Vital Cemetery to that of the Industrial School Cemetery demonstrated that the St. Vital burial assemblage was typical of a late 19th-century Christian cemetery.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Discussion and Conclusions

Research in general serves to resolve unanswered questions posed by the researcher. In the field of archaeology, the researcher often attempts to determine the antiquity of the archaeological materials and establish a link between the remains and a defined cultural group. Through the archaeological investigation of the St. Vital Cemetery, a number of research questions were answered.

The religious affiliation of the St. Vital Cemetery was confirmed through the analysis of mortuary practices, as most individuals were interred in a fashion consistent with burial practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The recovery of numerous devotional medals and a single rosary especially helped to confirm the identity of the unmarked burial ground as belonging to the St. Vital Parish. The analysis of various artifacts confirmed the antiquity of the cemetery as one that was used in the latter half of the 19th-century. Despite the answers afforded by the St. Vital Cemetery excavation, the skeletal and artifactual materials were unable to answer a number of seemingly simple questions. For this purpose, detailed consultation of documentary sources was necessary.

8.1 Why was the St. Vital Cemetery Abandoned?

The St. Vital Cemetery was used for a brief period between July 1879 and March 1885. In the early years of its use, the burial ground of the St. Vital Parish was

conveniently located in close proximity to the first two structures used by the small Roman Catholic Mission. At this time the town of Battleford, as well as the St. Vital Parish, was located south of the Battle River. In late 1883, Father Bigonessé commissioned the construction of a chapel in the new townsite, located nearly two kilometers away from the St. Vital Cemetery (Horacki 1977: 25). The new town of Battleford was then situated between the Battle and North Saskatchewan Rivers. Despite its distance from the new chapel, the St. Vital Parish continued to use the St. Vital Cemetery for over a year, at which time the parish began using the cemetery of the North West Mounted Police.

Interestingly, the initial abandonment of the St. Vital Cemetery precisely corresponded to the commencement of local events comprising the 1885 North-West Rebellion. The events that transpired in Battleford during the rebellion were primarily due to the dissatisfaction of local First Nations people with the terms of Treaty Six. So far, the government had not lived up to its promises with regards to rations, and as a result, many residents of the Battleford Agency reserves were dying of starvation. The refusal of the government to negotiate the conditions of the treaty acted as an insult to those who had been willing to come to a peaceful resolution (Lux 2001: 49-53).

Throughout the rebellion, the citizens of Battleford took refuge within the confines of the nearby fort in fear for their safety. Daily life for these families ceased for the entirety of April 1885. On many occasions, the townspeople watched as their homes and businesses were looted and torched (Hanson 2003: 35-54). The community of Battleford suffered from such upheaval at this time that it forced the opening of a new cemetery. Local rebellion casualty Bernard Tremont was the first individual interred in the NWMP Cemetery, as his remains were interred in this location on April 3rd, 1885

(PADA, SVP, Régistre des Mariages, Baptêmes, Sépultures pour la Mission de St. Vital de Battleford, N.W.T.). Tremont was a member of the St. Vital Parish.

Conveniently, the NWMP Cemetery was located near the chapel of the St. Vital Parish and the barracks of Fort Battleford. It is reasonable to believe that the two kilometer trek to the St. Vital Cemetery was suddenly too risky considering the state of affairs at that time. From that point onward, the St. Vital Parish used the NWMP Cemetery as their burial ground, despite the complaints of local members of the force. The St. Vital Parish ceased using the NWMP Cemetery with the opening of the town Cemetery in April 1889, at which time various individuals from both the NWMP and St. Vital Cemeteries were exhumed and moved to the new burial ground.

8.2 Why was the St. Vital Cemetery Neglected?

After its initial abandonment in the spring of 1885, the St. Vital Cemetery was soon forgotten. A number of factors likely led to its neglect, including the lack of permanent gravemarkers, the effects of numerous fires, and the migration of families away from the Battleford area as fallout of the North-West Rebellion.

After the rebellion, the Métis and many First Nations bands were labeled as traitors of the government and were treated as such. As a result, many families fled rather than suffer the consequences (Stonechild and Waiser 1997: 227). In the years following the rebellion, the reserves of the Battleford Agency suffered a population loss of 50 percent due to disease and/or migration (Lux 2001: 57-58). Many Métis families (including members of the St. Vital Parish) also left the area, in addition to the number of parishioners who were charged with treason, including Duncan Nolin, Basil Lafond, and Joseph Nolin Sr. (Stonechild and Waiser 1997:104). It is possible that the neglect

suffered by the St. Vital Cemetery was due in part to the movement of families away from the Battleford area in the late 19th-century.

A similar situation was encountered in Pembina, North Dakota with regards to the abandonment and neglect of a 19th-century Roman Catholic cemetery. The Roman Catholic Mission and associated cemetery at Pembina was established in 1818 under the direction of Father Sévère Dumoulin (Diocese of Québec) to serve the Métis traders residing in the area. Abandonment and subsequent relocation of the Pembina mission took place in 1823, when it was realized that the settlement was actually located in the United States slightly south of the 49th parallel (Swan and Jerome 1999: 81). The cemetery and those individuals buried within its confines were left behind. The Roman Catholic cemetery at Pembina was consequently neglected, but was not forgotten as in the case of the St. Vital Cemetery. Attempts were often made to save the burial ground from desecration, although the land housing the cemetery was respected and left untouched by the landowners for a number of years. Action was finally taken in the 1990s, however, when private landowners suddenly began cultivating the area knowing full-well that the remains of numerous individuals were interred in this location (Swan and Jerome 1999). After a number of surveys of the land in question, countless public meetings, and various court proceedings, the Roman Catholic cemetery at Pembina was saved from further disturbance. Thankfully, the burials were only slightly disturbed. Excavation of the cemetery and relocation of the burials was not necessary in this case.

To date, it is unknown whether gravemarkers were erected to commemorate the lives of the deceased who were buried within the confines of the St. Vital Cemetery. The survival of gravemarkers was largely dependent on the material that was used in their construction. Wooden crosses, for instance, are highly degradable especially in an area

that often suffered the effects of damaging prairie fires. Furthermore, the area surrounding the St. Vital Cemetery was highly damaged by fires in the spring of the 1885 North-West Rebellion. At this time, numerous houses, businesses, government buildings, as well as structures associated with the Industrial School, were burned beyond recognition (Hanson 2003: 35-54; Stonechild and Waiser 1997: 104-105, 135-136). Battleford resident James Clinkskill watched from inside the walls of Fort Battleford in the week of April 13th, 1885 as “the smoke of fires was seen in all directions” (Hanson 2003: 50). The close proximity of the St. Vital Cemetery to numerous burning structures suggests that the surrounding fires may have swept through the cemetery and destroyed whatever crudely constructed gravemarkers were present.

The area of land housing the St. Vital Cemetery was surveyed by R.C. Laurie in 1912 for landowner Charles J. Johnson (Information Services Corporation, Registered Plan number K3252, Glory Mount- An Addition to Battleford, 1912). Johnson was planning to develop the quarter section of land into a subdivision of South Battleford called ‘Glory Mount’. In his survey, Laurie ignored the location of the St. Vital Cemetery, which would have been located on the land denoted as block 14. If gravemarkers had been present, one would think that the cemetery would have been marked on the surveyor’s map. Additionally, it was not as though Laurie was unaware of the cemetery’s existence, as it was he who first documented its location in the 1886 survey of the Battleford to Swift Current trail (Information Services Corporation, R.C. Laurie, Field Notes Battleford to Swift Current Trail Survey, Field Book 4479, plan no. 447, File no. 754, 1886). Why the cemetery’s location was ignored is unknown. It seemed as though Johnson planned to sell the lots of the land comprising Glory Mount. Therefore, it is possible that the location of the cemetery was purposefully overlooked.

The entirety of block 14 (containing the St. Vital Cemetery) would have meant a loss of revenue for Johnson if the buyer was to learn that a cemetery was located on the property.

Lastly, a simple explanation is offered. Perhaps the St. Vital Cemetery suffered from neglect simply due to its distance from the growing town of Battleford. The area comprising South Battleford was largely destroyed as a result of the rebellion and it seems occupation of land in this area never quite regained its previous popularity.

As previously mentioned, archaeological investigation of the Battleford Industrial School Cemetery took place in 1974. In total, the remains of 72 individuals were excavated. In addition, two marked graves were left untouched. Strangely, the names of only 50 individuals were recorded in the parish register of Battleford's Church of England. In this case, parish records proved to be incomplete, as the burials of 24 individuals were not recorded (Anderson et al 1974). Furthermore, burial records for the Industrial School Cemetery began in 1895, over 10 years after the first interment according to a gravemarker present at the site dating to 1884. These individuals likely represented the remains of Battleford citizens who were buried in the school cemetery. Unlike the St. Vital Cemetery, the cemetery of the Industrial School fell into a state of disrepair but was not completely forgotten. Many Battleford residents were well-aware of its existence prior to its excavation in 1974. Perhaps this was due to the prolonged use of the Industrial School Cemetery (1884-1913) as a burial ground as compared to the brief six years that the St. Vital Cemetery was in operation. Or instead, perhaps the Industrial School Cemetery was not completely forgotten due to the presence of gravemarkers at the site.

Oddly, the Industrial School Cemetery continued to be used as a burial ground after the North-West Rebellion, while the nearby St. Vital Cemetery was completely deserted. The cemetery of the Industrial School, however, was suitably located near the school itself. To bury the students of the school in the NWMP or Town of Battleford Cemetery would have been overly inconvenient. Alternatively, the use of these cemeteries by the St. Vital Parish was understandable due to their close proximity to the chapel of the Roman Catholic Church.

8.3 Comparison of the St. Vital Parish Register to the Burial Assemblage

At the onset of this investigation, it was hoped that burial features unearthed at the St. Vital Cemetery would be individually identified upon comparison to the St. Vital Parish Register. Comparison of the burial assemblage to the parish register proved to be frustrating. Numerically, the two sources of information seemed to correspond. The parish register listed the interment of 34 individuals prior to the abandonment of the St. Vital Cemetery in the spring of 1885. In total, the excavation of the St. Vital Cemetery in the summer of 2001 led to the recovery of only 30 individuals. In addition, the remains of three individuals were recovered in 1972 as a result of previous disturbance suffered by the St. Vital Cemetery in 1931. Between the human remains collected in 1972 and those unearthed in the summer of 2001, the partial and complete remains of 33 individuals were represented. To further complicate matters, three empty coffins were recovered from the cemetery excavation suggesting that these individuals were exhumed after their initial interment in the St. Vital Cemetery.

Although the numerical values seemed to be nearly equivalent, comparison of the demographic information offered by each of these sources proved to be confusing.

Compared to the parish register, the number of adults recovered from the cemetery excavation was excessive (four extra adults), as was the number of subadults (one extra subadult). On the contrary, the remains of four infants were missing from the burial assemblage. The following is an attempt to explain the discrepancies between the two sources of data.

The under-representation of infant burials at the cemetery excavation is easily explained by the small size of the coffins. It is entirely possible that burial features housing the remains of children were simply missed during the excavation of the St. Vital Cemetery, even though precaution was taken to avoid this occurrence.

Interestingly, the presence of burial feature 17 was not at all accountable in the St. Vital Parish Register. According to the parish register, only a single male over the age of 30 was interred by the St. Vital Parish prior to the abandonment of the St. Vital Cemetery. This individual was Francois Gonot. Circumstantial evidence and corresponding demographic data, however, suggested a link between parishioner Francois Gonot and burial feature 24. In this case, perhaps the individual associated with burial feature 17 was not a member of the St. Vital Parish and represents the interment of a Protestant in the Roman Catholic cemetery. On the other hand, the unique coffin construction employed in the burial of feature 17 (tapered coffin within a rectangular box) may suggest that this individual was transported from another location to be interred in the St. Vital Cemetery. Either way, the burial of this specific individual does not seem to be recorded in the St. Vital Parish Register.

A similar problem was encountered with burial feature 7, as the St. Vital Parish Register did not record the burial of an elderly woman until 1890, five years after the abandonment of the St. Vital Cemetery. In this case, the individual associated with

burial feature 7 may also represent the burial of a Protestant in the Roman Catholic cemetery. As described in Chapter Seven, the remains of burial feature 12 may represent the remains of an individual not affiliated with the St. Vital Parish due to differential mortuary treatment. In addition, the individual associated with burial feature 13 may have been interred prior to the use of the St. Vital Cemetery. Interestingly, neither burial feature 12 nor burial feature 13 can be accounted for upon comparison of the St. Vital burial assemblage to the St. Vital Parish Register.

The recovery of three empty coffins (features 5A, 5C, and 16) suggested the exhumation and relocation of three individuals from the St. Vital Cemetery. As previously mentioned, burial features 5A and 5C (child-sized coffins) may represent the initial burial location of Jane Hodgson and/or William Alexander Pambrun (see Chapter Three). The remains of both Jane Hodgson and William Alexander Pambrun now rest in the Town Cemetery according to the records of the town of Battleford. Empty burial feature 16 (adult-sized) perhaps once housed the remains of 23 year-old John Cardinal.

Comparison of historic period skeletal assemblages to associated documentary records also proved to be frustrating for those involved in the excavation of the St. Thomas Anglican Cemetery in Belleville, Ontario (Saunders et al 1995). Archaeological investigations of the St. Thomas Cemetery took place in the summer of 1989. The cemetery, used for burial between 1821 and 1874, housed the remains of 577 individuals (Saunders et al 1995: 95). Evaluation of the parish register according to the methods outlined by Drake (1974) proved the reliability of the parish records. Still, excavation of the St. Thomas Cemetery revealed the overrepresentation of infants upon comparison of the burial assemblage to the records of the parish. In this case, the recovery of excessive infant burials was attributed to “temporal bias”, in which case “the excavation of the

excavation drew more heavily from burials carried out in the latter decades of cemetery use when larger numbers of infants were buried at St. Thomas” (Saunders et al 1995: 102).

8.4 Concluding Remarks

The use of documentary sources in addition to the data provided by archaeological excavation is crucial to the success of historic period cemetery investigations as demonstrated through the study of the St. Vital Cemetery. In essence, the two sets of data complemented each other, offering a complete picture of past events unlike any attained by using each of these in isolation.

After its abandonment in 1885, the St. Vital Cemetery suffered over 100 years of neglect until its rediscovery in the fall of 1999. The cooperation of numerous parties, including the current landowners, allowed the successful recovery of the human remains and associated cultural materials in order to protect the small 19th-century burial ground from further desecration. On October 17th, 2002 a reburial ceremony was held at the Town of Battleford Cemetery where the remains of these individuals were laid to rest. The religious affiliation and the cultural heritage of these individuals were acknowledged in a joint ceremony conducted by the St. Vital Parish and members of the local Tribal Council. In the spring of 2003, a gravemarker was erected to commemorate the lives of these seemingly forgotten members of the Battleford community.

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25 October 1880

20 January 1883

17 February 1883

3 March 1883

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23 August 1884

6 March 1885

15 February 1886

13 September 1886

20 December 1886

4 February 1888

20 March 1889

3 April 1889

10 April 1889
17 April 1889
4 June 1897
3 September 1897

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